Brownouts, no brownouts, brownouts . . .

By Amy R. Remo

ENERGY OFFICIALS SPOKE TOO SOON that Luzon, including Metro Manila, would be spared from further rotating brownouts.

Power supply in the country's main island suffered a shortfall yesterday afternoon due to the breakdown of two power units, causing up to three-hour rotating outages, according to National Grid Corp. of the Philippines (NGCP).

NGCP said Luzon registered a deficit

BROWNOUTS A7

ACROSS / A11

Sorsogon solon convicted of graft

BUSINESS / B1

SMC bags MRT 7 project linking QC to Bulacan

NEWS / A2

Metro sizzles: Hottest day recorded

WORLD / A18

Guatemala cop chief, drug czar arrested

SPORTS / A14

Purefoods sweeps Alaska, bags crown

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Thursday, March 4, 2010 ★★ 6 sections / Vol. 23 / No. 86 P18

Mike Arroyo's cousin new PNP chief prober

By Marlen Ramos

A RELATIVE OF FIRST GENTLEMAN Jose Miguel Arroyo has been designated chief investigator of the Philippine National Police (PNP).

Chief Supt. Francisco Don Montenegro now heads the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG), the PNP's

MIKE A4

Mendoza is now both DOTC and executive secretary

MENDOZA Always a soldier, follows orders

BAUTISTA Back to the Palace after ouster from Malaya

AGRA Toll Gen and Justice portfolios in concurrent capacity

LAGDAMEO Budget secretary vice Rolando Andaya

By TJ Burgonio

SAME FACES, NO SURPRISES.

Heeding the Supreme Court, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday replaced Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita and at least five other Cabinet officials running for local posts in the May 10 national elections, Malacañang announced.

Ms Arroyo tapped Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza as her new executive secretary in a Cabinet revamp prompted by the Supreme Court ruling that appointive officials running for election were deemed resigned.

Ermita, 74, is seeking a seat in Congress in his Batangas hometown.

Press Secretary Cerge Remonde Jr. advanced that Ms Arroyo's moves were prompted by the high court ruling that officials running for election were deemed

MENDOZA A6

'Name narco-politicos'

US report on drugs sets off alarm bells

By Norman Bordadora and Cathy C. Yamsuan

A FLURRY OF CALLS FOR NAMES TO BE NAMED was raised yesterday in reaction to the United States' expressed concern about the possibility of narco-politics influencing the Philippine elections on May 10.

Sen. Francis Escudero said the US Department of State itself should name the candidates receiving drug money from traffickers for their campaign, "so that the voters would know and give time for those candidates to explain and deny" the accusation.

"It's also important to know this so that any presidential candidate is not ... held by the nose by drug lords," Escudero told reporters.

Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, the vice presidential candidate of the Partido ng Masang Pilipino (PMP) and president of the United Opposition, urged the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) to produce a list of politicians benefiting from the multibillion-peso drug trade.

But Binay warned against "witch-hunt" in the media during the election period, and said the list should include only those politicians whose links to drug syndicates were backed by solid evidence.

NAME A6

SMART VOTING Smartmatic-TIM officials Miguel Avila (left) and Cesar Flores (right) demonstrate how voting is actually done on a PCOS machine at the Inquirer office on Tuesday night. Inquirer staff filled out sample ballots and voted in a simulation of voting procedures on Election Day.

BALLOT BOX

SECURITY KEY

SECURITY LOCK

Narcotics agent accuses Tingas of coddling kin

By Cynthia D. Balana and Mike Morales

AN AGENT OF THE PHILIPPINE Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) has accused retired Supreme Court Justice Dante Tingas and his son, Taguig Mayor Sigfrido Tingas, of influencing a judge into dismissing a drug-pushing charge against their close relatives.

Jeffrey M. Ruguero, PDEA intelligence officer II, who posed as the buyer to bust the Tingas kin, wrote Chief Justice Reynato Puno on Feb. 8 seeking the

NARCS A6

HOT CARGO Government agents seize sacks of allegedly illegal substance used for making shabu, hidden in a rice shipment aboard the Vietnamese ship MV Tai Thien 66 in Bacolod City on Jan. 28.

'High IQ not qualification for public office'

By Leila B. Salaverria

SAYING A HIGH IQ IS NEVER A gauge of good public service, the Commission on Elections (Comelec) has junked disqualification cases against Sen. Manuel "Lito" Lapid and world boxing champ Manny Pacquiao, whose candidacies in the May elections were questioned for lack of residency.

The Comelec's second division found no merit in the petition filed by Ely Pamatong, a flamboyant lawyer and himself a disqualified presidential aspirant whose poll officials earlier ordered detained for calling them "thieves" during a public hearing in January.

Featuring argued that Lapid, a reelectionist, was "hardly educated" and knew little about lawmaking, while congressional aspirant Pacquiao was "essentially very poor and not prepared to step into the ring of legislation."

HIGH IQ A6

Comelec admits double registrants in voters' list

By Christine O. Avendaño

MORE BALLOTS MAY BE PRINTed than the number of actual voters with the admission of the Commission on Elections (Comelec) yesterday that the 50.7 million registered voters in the May polls included those who had registered twice or more.

At the resumption of a joint congressional committee hearing on poll automation, Comelec officials could not readily provide the number of double registrants but said it was not as big as the 5 million or 3.2 million being projected by some quarters.

Comelec Chair Jose Melo downplayed the controversy and said that boards of election inspectors (BEIs) would be given copies of double registrants with

COMELEC A4

Drunk beckles Erap, is subdued by Jinggoy guard

By Christian V. Esguerra and Florencio Bazna

DUMAGUETE CITY—TAKE IT FROM Joseph "Erap" Estrada: You can't let liquor go to your head.

A drunken man in his 40s lost control on Tuesday and attacked ex-Estrada, the standard-bearer of the Pwersa ng

ERAP A6

JPE tags Angara as Villar emissary to Gordon

By Christine O. Avendaño

THE EMISSARY SENT BY SEN. Manuel Villar to convince Sen. Richard Gordon to withdraw from the presidential race in exchange for certain favors is Sen. Edgardo Angara.

Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile "surmised" this yesterday, and said Gordon had confirmed to him the offer made. He said Gordon was "furious and insulted by the travesty and gall of Villar to think that he can be intimidated by money, much less lured by an offer for a position of power."

On Tuesday, Gordon said in a live radio interview that an emissary of Villar's had offered him a Cabinet post as well as reimbursement of his campaign expenses if he would pull out of the presidential race and withdraw his signature from a Senate committee report censuring Villar in connection with the C-5 road extension project.

Enrile had earlier claimed that Villar was behind a plot to oust him as Senate president because of the committee report, and that Villar had planned to have Angara replace him.

Yesterday, Enrile said: "My recollection is that when I filed the report of the committee of

JPE TAGS A2

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Northeast	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Naga	Partly Cloudy
Dagupan	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
San Fabian	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Partly Cloudy

P2M
13	8	3	30	25	29

6/49 JACKPOT
5	8	3	6	4	5

4D LOTTO
4	5	2	8

3D LOTTO
8	0	1

MEGA LOTTO 6/45
11	13	18	37	39	44

P4,823,064.00

'MORONG 43' TORTURE PROBE

CHR summons AFP, PNP

By Nikko Dizon and Jocelyn Uy

THE COMMISSION ON HUman Rights (CHR) has summoned officials from the military, the police and the judiciary in connection with its investigation into allegations that the "Morong 43" have been tortured.

The officials were asked to personally appear on March 18 at a CHR hearing "under the pain of contempt," according to a Feb. 26 order from CHR chair Leila de Lima.

Summoned were: Maj. Gen. Jorge Segovia, commander of the army's 2nd Infantry Division, Col. Aurelio Baladad, commander of the 202nd Infantry Brigade; Lt. Col. Irene Alnonay, commander of the 16th Infantry Battalion; Supt. Hilarion Balengalong, Rizal Provincial Police commander; Judge Cesar Mangulabnan, presiding judge of the Imus, Cavite, Regional Trial Court Branch 22; then prosecutor Ramon Bensurto, and Dr. Melinda Villanueva and Ann Manuel Miranda.

Told to answer the allegations of torture within 10 days were: Armed Forces Chief Gen. Victor Ibrado, Philippine National Police Chief Dir. Gen. Jesus Verzosa; Army Commanding General Lt. Gen. Delfin Bangit; and Southern Luzon Command chief Lt. Gen. Roland Desiderio.

GMA, isa

Asked to file their statements were President Macapagal-Arroyo, Defense Secretary Norberto Gonzales, Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno and Justice Secretary Agnes Devanadera.

The CHR also ordered the members of the Armed Forces and the PNP who have custody of the Morong 43 from "committing prohibited acts of physical and mental torture."

The military arrested the 43 during a Feb. 6 raid on a safe house in Morong, Rizal, owned by the Velascoes. Authorities claimed they arrested communist rebels but the 43 said they were health workers attending a seminar.

The CHR is conducting its probe as a result of the charges filed against the officials for alleged human rights violations, illegal detention, physical and mental torture and the withholding of the Morong 43's rights to counsel and to counter visitors.

All those summoned, with the exception of the Velascoes, were asked to explain why the 43 are still being detained in a military camp.

Change of lawyers

Meanwhile, a military spokesperson yesterday said that three of the detainees said they wanted a change lawyers after their lawyer allegedly asked them to sign an affidavit accusing the rebel group.

According to Lt. Col. Romeo Brawner Jr., the three claimed that their lawyer, Romeo Capulong, had prepared a complaint of torture and sexual molestation against their military custodians at the Army's Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal.

The three, who also confessed to being members of the communist New People's Army, were identified as Valmenian Pedino, Cherylyn Tawagon and Eleanor Carandang.

Brawner said they refused to sign the affidavit prepared by Capulong in the presence of CHR representatives on Sunday.

They instead submitted a separate affidavit asking to remain inside the camp and be provided with new counsel.

Metro sizzles

By Nikko Dizon

METRO MANILA SIZZLED YESTERDAY AS the mercury topped 35.5 degrees Celsius, the hottest day of the year so far.

Maximum temperature yesterday was recorded at 3:36 p.m. at the Science Garden station of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration in Quezon City, according to Gener Quilong of the Pagasa weather forecasting center.

Quilong said the 35.5 degrees easily topped the maximum temperature of 34.4 Celsius recorded last Tuesday.

It was a degree more than the previous record for the hottest day of the year on Feb. 27 when the mercury rose to 34.5 degrees, said Nathaniel Cruz, Pagasa deputy administrator for administration and operations.

Cruz noted that maximum temperatures of 35 degrees are not only in April.

"It's really early to see these kind of numbers in terms of maximum temperatures. These are abnormally warm or warmer than usual conditions," Cruz said.

The weather bureau expects temperatures of 34 and 35 degrees to prevail until April.

Don't hide behind sisters' skirts, NP tells Noynoy

IF LIBERAL PARTY (LP) PRESIDENTial bet Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III and his three sisters were really sincere in saying they wanted to divest their holdings in Hacienda Luisita, then why don't they withdraw the family's court motions to stop the distribution of the land to their tenants?

Carlos Bed. Crispin "Boying" Remulla hurled this challenge after recent media reports quoted Aquino's three sisters—Ballsy Aquino-Cruz, Pinky Aquino-Abellada and Viel Aquino-Dee—as saying they wished to sell their holdings in the sugar plantation but were unable to do so because of pending court, large debts and labor problems.

Too economical

"The three Aquino sisters are too economical with the truth when they say they want out of Hacienda Luisita. And yet they have not lifted a finger to withdraw the temporary Restraining Order (TRO) issued by the Supreme Court that would effectively pave the way for the farmers to claim ownership of the property," Remulla said in a statement.

In any case, Remulla said Noynoy himself should answer the issues squarely and "not hide behind the skirts of his sisters."

According to Remulla, 500 hectares of Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac were sold by Noynoy's family in 1996 for P2 billion after then Governor Margarita "Tingting" Cojuangco "shepherded" Tarlac officials into orchestrating 3,290 hectares of Luisita from agricultural to mixed use," said Remulla.

Out of the P2 billion, the thousands of tenant-farmers in Luisita were only given P97.5 million, he added.

Noynoy and his sisters should disclose to the public how much they pocketed out of the P2 billion, said Remulla.

"If only 500 hectares of the 3,290 hectares were approved for reclassification into the Luisita Industrial Estate, we have the Department of Agrarian Reform to thank because if the Cojuangcos and Aquinos had it their way, as seen by the action of the Tarlac local government under then Governor Cojuangco, they would have transformed the entire 5,290 hectares from farmland to industrial, commercial and residential," said Remulla.

"The Aquinos and the Cojuangcos have blood on their hands for the massacres of unarmed and hapless farmers protesting what had been going on for a long time in Hacienda Luisita. Now they want to disown crimes by saying that they really want out of the property but they have not done anything to translate their words into action," Remulla said.

Problem they created

Regarding the debts of Hacienda Luisita, Remulla said "this was a problem they (the sisters) created." He said the "farmers had nothing to do with such debts" and Noynoy should not use it "as a convenient excuse to justify its nonfeasance vis-a-vis tenants."

Or, stress that the Aquino-Cojuangco family had nothing to do with controversial right-of-way payments in the SCTEx, Remulla claimed Don Pedro Cojuangco and other close relatives negotiated with the then Connection Development Authority on matters. The latter, he was eventually paid 39.00 per square meter while surrounding properties were paid only 6%.

San Miguel, MWSS break off Laiban dam talks

By Rue T. Dimondo

THE METROPOLitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) has terminated its joint venture talks with the San Miguel Bulk Water Co. Inc. for the proposed P65-billion Laiban dam project.

This will set back the country's goal of developing a major new water source in five years, several top MWSS officials said.

Ilocos Sur Rep. Eric Singson, MWSS chairman, Tuesday confirmed that the talks with

Lanao Sur voters' list padded by 200,000

MAG, LANAO DEL SUR—COMELEC Maximond Adiong Jr. on Tuesday said he was more worried by double registrations and flying voters in his province than by private armies.

Adiong, a Lakas-Kampi-CMD stalwart, said a padded voters' roll was more likely to undermine the electoral process.

The Lanao del Sur province and double registrants for instance could rear as many times as they desired to bear certain conditions.

He said there were about 300,000 registered voters in Lanao del Sur today unless the number should only be between 200,000 to 310,000.

Adiong said was padding might be a result of one person having multiple registrations, namely from thought into the province to register as voter or vote multiple votes, minors registered as voters and unnamed names.

Names of dead

"It is highly likely there lists also contain the names of dead people," he said.

By being able to cast their votes in the province, "those supposedly unqualified voters could subvert the will of the real electorate," Adiong said.

He said that as early as 2007 he had proposed that the Commission on Elections clean up its voters' list, but it went unheeded.

As to the presence of private armies in his province, Adiong said politicians engaged in feuds might have thought they needed more bodyguards.

"The armed men who are usually seen, especially with politicians, would be there due to some people's need to protect themselves from retaliatory attacks as a result of feuds," he said.

Credibility

Atty. Abdullah Dalidig, chair of the Islamic Movement for Electoral Reform and Good Governments, said the presence of armed groups could also affect the credibility of the polls.

"They may not have been originally intended for the elections but they can be employed to further the machinations of politicians running to gain votes," he said. *Reports from Ilyan Binauro and Charlie Sabun, Inquirer Mindanao*

Comelec: Operation quick count is history; May 10 poll results out in 2 days

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE 30,000 COUNTRY THAT prompted operation quick counts in the past may now be consigned to history.

The country's first nationwide automated elections on May 10 are expected to produce results in two days, according to the Commission on Elections (Comelec).

Comelec spokesperson James Jimenez said media and the other election watchdogs would not take long.

"The quick count would not be applicable because what could be faster than the official count now? The official count now would basically be the system used for the quick count in the past. The reason there was a quick count then was because there was a time canvass, the one from Comelec. Now, there is no more time canvass," he said.

Jimenez also said that since the results of the polling would be posted online, there was no need to require media outfits to secure permission to conduct their own quick count.

Asked whether media outlets could still secure accreditation, he said that this was subjected to be presume now because the results that all precincts were expected to be transmitted at roughly the same time.

But he also said that if media outlets would want to conduct their own count of the votes, they should clearly state where the votes that they had tallied had come from.

Under automated elections, the votes would be recorded and tallied by counting machines in each polling precinct, and the results would be electronically sent to the canvassing boards.

There would be no need to manually tally the votes, eliminating the long wait for the results.

Comelec admits double registrants ...

From page A1

the registration to deadline there lists casting their votes if they were not registered in their precincts.

Sen. Francis Escudero, chair of the Senate panel in the congressional oversight committee, remained apprehensive after Commissioner Director Jose Tolentino admitted the double registrants were included in the total number of registered voters.

He said he did not understand why if Comelec was aware of the double registrants, it would allow the printing of such number of ballots.

"For if indeed they have a list of double registrants, the Comelec would have more proper initiated a petition in court to have those names delisted. They should have withdrawn in person it. Why did they not do this?" Escudero said.

"However clear or perfect the automation system is, if the level of voters is not clean, there will be opportunity to fuel or increase the votes of any candidates," he said.

"It's not going to be one hair ballot to one voter so Comelec had earlier guaranteed to ensure there will be no more entry or fictitious votes to be cast in the elections," he said.

Escudero said that the excessive number of actual voters raised the possibility of cheating.

Not flying voters

Mole sought to ease apprehensions by saying that many of these double registrants were not "flying voters." They simply forgot to cancel their earlier registration, ending up being enrolled twice in the voter's list, he said.

"We should not know this out of proportion," he said.

Tolentino and Election Commissioner Gregorio Larrazabal explained that the poll body could not delete the names of double registrants because under the law, only the courts could do this.

But both Tolentino and Larrazabal said the Comelec had issued guidelines as early as October last year in dealing with double registrants. If there are two registrations of a voter in the same city, the second registration won't be considered, if the registration was in two cities, the recent registration would be considered.

1.2M double registrants

Tolentino could not readily give the total number of double registrants, but Howard Calleja, lawyer for the Bantay Poll Watch Council for Responsible Voting, said they numbered 1.2 million.

Using a copy of the Comelec's computerized voter's list, Calleja said that he extrapolated the figure from the 90,000 double registrants that the group found in Davao del Sur and Davao del Norte.

Larrazabal said that the Comelec was looking into Calleja's report. He said that the poll body would also like to know more details from recent Linggasan Pagbasak-up Oriente Cruz about his estimate of 7 million double registrants.

'Plucked from the air'

Mole said that Cruz's figure was "plucked from the air" and that he did not think the figure was that staggering.

Escudero also disclosed the committee had found that the National Printing Office (NPO) was not using "24/7" all of its machines to print the required number of ballots for May 10.

He said his committee would not allow that the printing of the ballots be outsourced.

Escudero said the Comelec should have known and prepared for the possibility that "NPO would not be able to do its job.

Comelec admits double registrants ...

From page A1

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Drunk heckles Erap, is subdued ...

From page A1

Marang Filipino, during a late-night campaign sortie attended by some 3,000 people at the city plaza.

Policeman Quirit also had a run-in with Estrada's eldest son, reelectionist Sen. Jinggoy Estrada. In the end, he took a headlock from a member of the security detail.

Estrada was standing onto the speech when Quirit, dressed in shorts and a basketball jersey, shouted at him in Filipino: "Erap, you're all talk!"

(Another version of the incident had Quirit yelling Presidential Municipal Arroyo's first name: "Gloria! Gloria!")

In which formats passed and, addressing the man, was denied about if he had been sent by the administration camp.

'Bong, Bong, Bong'

Two of Estrada's security escorts went over to Quirit and told him to pull himself together. Jinggoy Estrada later walked up to them.

Addressing the latter, Quirit said: "Bong, Bong, Bong." (It was not known if he meant Senator Bong Revilla Jr. of the Nacionalista Party or Sen. Bong "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. of the administration's Lakas-Kampi-CMD, who are both seeking reelection.)

"I am Jinggoy," the senator replied.

Quirit settled down only after a head butt was administered by a security man, resulting in a warm gash on his right eyebrow.

Members of the Barangay Inici Mercado, who were escorting the rally site, then took custody of Quirit and turned him over to the city police station.

Quirit, a resident of Tinago in Dumaguete, was released yesterday at noon.

Supt. Leopoldo Catuang, the police chief of Dumaguete, said Quirit was released after the regulation 12-hour period because no complainants filed formal charges against him.

Insulted

Estrada, himself a drinking man, told reporters later on Tuesday that he was fine although a bit insulted by Quirit.

"Para ngang nahulog pa ako. Di lang," he said.

According to a witness who refused to give his name, Estrada told his cook, "Inspirasyon ang Erap."

Talk of Estrada's drinking binges in Mukpolang with members of his so-called "midnight Cabinet" was rife during his administration.

But the ousted President has consistently denied such reports, saying these were all part of the black propaganda against him.

Serenade in Cebu

Estrada yesterday took his campaign to this province of Cebu, which has more than 2.9 million registered voters.

Accompanied by members of his senatorial ticket, he motored to the towns of Santander, Samboan, Boljoon, Dalaguete and Oslob.

Estrada's message was consistent. He denounces senatorial bases at Mukpolang and his reelection will be to the benefit of the predominantly poor Filipinos.

"I have to return as I can help these poor," he told a lean crowd of the scenic Boljoon barangay hall overlooking the Cebu Strait.

Unlike the Dumaguete outfit, the small rally in Boljoon served as an impromptu visit-city show.

Estrada and his son, Jinggoy, Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile and former Sen. Francisco Tatad serenaded the crowd of mostly old women.

'High IQ not qualification for public office'

From page A1

He also said candidates mired in "mental poverty" should be declared a nuisance, in the same way candidates with valid ID cases are removed out of the race.

Adiong, a Lakas-Kampi-CMD stalwart, said a padded voters' roll was more likely to undermine the electoral process.

The lawyer also branded Lapid and Pangan as "unqualified professional entertainers." Lapid used to be an action star while Pangan dabbled in movies, TV shows and even newspaper in between his drug-driven fights.

But the poll body ruled that applying public officials need not have a high educational attainment.

'Highly opinionated'

The Comelec noted that after giving a "highly opinionated opinion" of Lapid and Pangan's intellectual capacity, Pamaong failed to present proof that the two candidates fell short of the requirements for seeking public office.

"A candidate's high education at all-talented has never been held as qualifications for public office. To be sure, the quality of public service which an elected official can render is not measured by the level of his intelligence," the poll body said.

Pamaong also produced no evidence that Lapid and Pangan were nuisance candidates, akin to under a mandatory of the May 10 election, the Comelec added in a March 2 ruling.

Lapid, who is seeking reelection under the administration's Lakas-Kampi-CMD coalition, placed 12th—just making it to the winning circle—in a recent Pulse Asia survey of senatorial contenders.

Pangan is taking a second crack at a House seat in Surigao, past representatives. In 2007, the ring icon lost to the incumbent Democratic Congressman Surigao del Norte.

Arrested on the spot

Pamaong had also asked the Comelec to bar deposed President Joseph Estrada from seeking a second term and President Macapagal-Arroyo from running as congressional representative.

On Jan. 20, just as the 2nd Division was set to announce its dismissal of his petition versus Estrada, Pamaong showed results at the commissioners, calling them thieves as he walked out of the session hall. He was ordered arrested on the spot and detained for 18 days.

And just like the candidates, voters need not take a diploma course just to know how to cast their ballots in the country's first automated poll, according to a Comelec official.

They just need to follow two critical instructions: shade the ovals corresponding to their preferred candidates, and do not "overvote" or shade more ovals than is necessary, Comelec spokesperson James Jimenez said.

Jimenez and officials of Smartmatic, Comelec's technical partner in the automated polls, met with business editors and reporters on Tuesday night for a demo of the counting machines to be used in the May elections.

'Info overload'

Jimenez appealed to groups conducting voters' education campaigns to focus on three basics, especially since voters tend to have "information overload" when exposed to various forums discussing poll automation.

"The problem is that many collateral issues come up during such forums," he said. He said the basic information in the mind of the voter. One of the things we do in Comelec try to do is always bring the conversation back to the simplest of terms," he said.

"Let's always emphasize these things," Jimenez said. But time addressing the appeal to journalists.

The Comelec is also asking voters not to fold the ballot or put other marks on the paper as its not necessary. It could invalidate the ballot, though never-minded, is not unrecognized.

Earlier this week, Senate President Pro Tempore Jinggoy Estrada admitted he still knows little about the automated election system except for the ballot being as long as a plain vote and that it contained hundreds of names that need to be shaded.

Pols warned on talks delay; gov't, MILF reps meet in KL

THE PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER ON THE Peace Process has cautioned politicians who are rallying for cessation of peace negotiations with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) until the next administration is elected, saying it "would send a dangerous signal to the nation and international community."

"To suspend the talks now is to send a very dangerous signal to the nation and the world that peace is having grave a hard time in politics," Secretary Arabella Abaya said, referring to calls by former senator Franklin Drilon, Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, Muntinlupa Rep. Rufty Biazon and some local officials to leave the peace negotiations to the next set of administration.

Drilon is running for senator in the May national elections while the younger Biazon is bidding to swap seats with his father in both chambers of Congress.

Meanwhile, government representatives will meet with MILF counterparts in Kuala Lumpur today but the Malaysian mediator said a peace deal is unlikely before President Macapagal-Arroyo steps down later this year.

Othman Razak said Wednesday the officials and MILF representatives would meet at an undisclosed location in the Malaysian capital, but did not say how long the talks would last.

"It will be more of a question-and-answer session rather than any negotiations taking place and they could talk about some kind of interim arrangement before any proper agreement is reached," Othman told AFP.

Following a series of runs in selected areas in Mindanao, the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace Process (Oppap) announced its "Dialogue Mindanao" program yesterday in Puerto Princesa City.

Abaya asked politicians "think of and be responsible for what might be the repercussions on security which such talk can trigger" With AFP

Court-martial clears colonel

By Jocelyn R. Uy

A MILITARY TRIBUNAL HAS ORDERED FOR the release of a Marine colonel, one of those accused of leading the failed power grab of February 2006, for failure of the prosecution to provide sufficient evidence to implicate him.

The general court martial on Tuesday ruled in favor of Col. Armando Balce when it added the court to overturn its previous decisions rejecting an appeal to dismiss the multiple charges against him.

"Mr. Balce's statement opposing his motion for reconsideration but after the court weighed our motions and the evidence of Balce's counsel, it ruled in his favor," Col. Jose Feliciano Lay lead military prosecutor said yesterday.

Balce would also be reinstated to the military service "as a normal reassignment" of the command of the core against him, until 6 p.m.

Balce has been incarcerated at the Marine barracks at Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City since 2006.

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'Name narco-politicos'; US report on drugs alarming

From page A1

"If the authorities have a roster of the most wanted kidnap-for-ransom gangs, they can't [do] anything about it. But if they [have] names of specific targets so we can build airtight cases against them that can stand in court, and so the war against drugs will claim no collateral damage that destroys reputations and civil liberties, especially during an election season when such accusations are easy to concoct and circulate," he said.

Commission on Elections Chair Jose Melo, who was in the forum yesterday, said the finding of the US trade department was "dangerous."

But Melo said the Comelec had no [exact] of such a development in the local scene. He said the poll body was busy ensuring that the first automated elections in the country would be clean.

Check sources of donations

Former Dangerous Drugs Board Chair Vicente Sotto III said candidates for elective posts should check the sources of their donations.

"Everyone drug money from running wins the polls, the candidates themselves should refrain from accepting financial assistance from unknown sources," said Sotto, a senatorial candidate of the Nationalist People's Coalition.

"Unfortunately, some of these candidacies might have already been influenced. Vigilance is the key," he said.

Show proof

Bandolerismo Inc. Rigoey Estrada challenged the PDEA to show proof for its report in the US State Department that drug money could influence the results of the 2010 elections.

"The PDEA should substantiate the report so we can [know if] there is truth to it. If that is the case, we are in a very dangerous situation," said the oldest son of retired President Joseph Estrada, who is also seeking reelection.

Another PMP senatorial candidate, former Sen. Francisco Tatad, claimed that in a small town in Mindanao, votes could be bought for as much as P10,000 each.

"It's a drug center," he said.

Tatad said candidates who were spending the most in their campaign should reveal the sources of their funds.

"[When] the local campaign kicks to on March 26, you might find local candidates spending in credible sums of money," he said.

Shabu in rice imports

Sen. Richard Gordon, the standard-bearer of the Bagumbayan party, wants the PDEA to look for to reports that a rice importation to the Visayas included shipments of shabu (methamphetamine hydrochloride).

Gordon cited reports that the rice same "match] from Thailand" and entered the country through Batanes, Bohol and Cagayan.

He said he had planned to investigate the matter as the chair of the Senate blue ribbon committee but that lack of time prevented him from doing so.

"I suspect dissatisfaction with the [National Food Authority] rice importation. I was supposed to investigate shabu in rice [but] I was not able to do so. I would have wanted the Senate to investigate," he said.

Gordon said narco-politicos could be behind the shipments.

"It could be [that] making the election as I suspect same-politics, but I have no proof that I have been getting too much noise. Some are even making everybody known who's behind it in Cagayan," he said.

Gordon said he had alerted the PDEA about the shipments "but only it. Should but also to many party around the country."

"I am requesting shame," he said. "The reports I've heard are that these are wholesale deliveries. Even the PDEA guy who briefed me said there are a lot of drugs in Iloilo and Cagayan. I acknowledged part operators to be on the lookout."

The senator said digging shabu among the stacks of imported rice could be considered a double whammy.

"At the very least, they are giving us less rice. And at the very most, reports said they [are] to undermine millers that can be used for explosives and as an admixture for shabu. So you have less rice and also less, quality shabu!" he said.

6 in W. Visayas

Neal Lobrenia, the PDEA director in Western Visayas, said six candidates in the region had been monitored since last year for drug links.

"We have established their links with known personalities and groups involved in the drug trade," he told the Inquirer in Iloilo City.

Lobrenia said some of the candidates had served as legal counsel for drug personalities and groups, and that others had been functioned as regularly meeting with these groups.

He said the candidates were running for various positions from councilor to congressman in the provinces of Iloilo, Negros Occidental, Antique and Capiz.

Lobrenia said the drug groups and personalities had expanded their operations from trafficking and influencing law enforcers, members of the judiciary and of the prosecution system to "infiltrating" the legislative and policemaking bodies.

He said officials who had literally come out with drug groups could use their influence to protect the operations of the traffickers.

"It is common knowledge who these candidates are, but we have yet no proof to build teams in court. As soon as we have enough evidence, we will file cases against them," Lobrenia said.

No. 1 region

Randy Pedrosa, the PDEA director in Central Visayas, said the agency had been keeping close tabs on persons involved in narcopolitics as part of its work.

He said the vigorous campaign has made Central Visayas the No. 1 region in the PDEA's fight against illegal drugs.

Pedrosa said that in 2009, the PDEA had seized P26 million worth of illegal drugs, nearly double the P14 million. Last year's figure represented a big leap from the P4 million worth of drugs seized in 2008.

He said a total of 1,675 operations conducted in 2009 resulted in the arrest of 1,200 drug personalities, all of whom were charged in court.

2 candidates

According to Pedrosa, the active participation of the public made it possible for the PDEA and the Philippine National Police to successfully purge their unwilling campaign in 2009.

He said two candidates—one for councilor in Cebu City and the other for board member in Bohol province—are being monitored.

He said the two candidates had a history of arrests because of their involvement in illegal drugs. With reports from Christine Avendaño in Manila; Nestor B. Burgos Jr. and Chito G. Aragon, Inquirer Visayas

Narcs agent accuses Tingas of being behind dismissal of drug raps vs kin

From page A1

dismissal of Judge Raul Gil, banned of the Regional Trial Court Branch 267 of Pasig City (Taguig City station) who handled the case.

Roquero also filed a formal complaint in the Supreme Court on Feb. 17 seeking an investigation of Villanueva for ignoring "the strong and sufficient evidence of the prosecution by the trial dismissive to evidence submitted by the defense." Of dismissive to evidence is a pleading for the court to order the outright dismissal of charges pending before it due to weak evidence.]

Politically motivated

Retired Justice Ninja praised the dropped off the complaint filed against him and son Ted Failon, describing it as "politically motivated."

"The prosecution is simply false and utterly unfounded," the elder Tingas said. "The attempt to include me and my son in the administrative complaint appears to be politically motivated."

Tingas, who's seeking the mayoralty post for son a re-election bidding, pointed out that if the accusation had any [within it], the drug suspects would have not spent at least two years in jail while their case was being heard.

"From what I've read in the papers and columns, the case was dismissed on dismissive to evidence that shows the prosecution evidence is weak," said the former Supreme Court associate justice.

He lamented that "when a Tingas is being accused of something, they always drag me names," referring to his son Freddie and himself, a thoroughly conservative before being appointed to the high court by President Macapagal Arroyo.

Buy-bust operation

In his letter to Perez and in his complaint, Roquero said he was the person buyer in the case filed by PDEA against Fernando Tingas, Alberto Tingas and Milo Carlos.

The three were arrested in a buy-bust operation on July 11, 2007 in front of a house in Ususan, Taguig. The house was tagged by "Bilag," a informant anti-crime group, as the operational home of the Tingas political clan.

The TV show denied an episode in the buy-bust operation.

Several other men nominated Tingas had been arrested by PDEA and the police on drug related charges, including Joel Tingas and Bernardo Tingas.

Drug syndicate

A PDEA report dated June 22, 2009 identified Joel as "a leader of the Tingas drug syndicate." PDEA chief Dionisio Santiago told reporters after Joel's arrest for selling P300,000 worth of "shabu" (methamphetamine hydrochloride) that "he [Joel] is a cousin of [alleged Tingas]."

Bernardo was arrested in a buy-bust operation at his house in Quezon in 2007.

Roquero said that from the testimony of witnesses, the prosecution had satisfied the elements of the crime of illegal sale and possession of drugs.

He said the outcome of the case was "heavily influenced" by the retired justice and the mayor.

Chemistry report

The PDEA agent said Villanueva rendered a verdict without any legal basis considering the testimony of the witnesses and evidence, including a chemistry report, presented during the trial.

"We did our best to have the accused convicted with only ourselves to rely on, but the court had other plans and looked for loopholes. So, they, the three of them, could go scot-free at our expense," Roquero told Perez.

"I could not discount the possibility of a political favor being offered them," he added.

Sacrifice wanted

Roquero said Villanueva's decision was disheartening for drug law enforcers because it could affect their interest to arrest illegal drug operators.

"This time, why and sacrifice in this particular case got many ed," the PDEA agent said.

Roquero believed that Villanueva succumbed to pressure when he dismissed the charges on Feb. 16, a violation of the Code of Judicial Conduct, which provides that a judge must be vigilant against any attempt to subvert the independence of the judiciary and resist any pressure from whatever source.

Tilting scales of justice

The PDEA agent noted that the very opening statement of Villanueva's order showed that "he is tilting the scales of justice in favor of the accused, reducing the [the witnesses'] testimonies to [what] he merely 'conceived.'"

Judge like accused's counsel

"On the contrary, it is Judge Villanueva's order which is founded on mere speculations. He appeared more as counsel for the accused instead of disposing cold, neutrality as the presiding judge," Roquero said.

Roquero said there was sufficient evidence to convict the Tingas because they yielded not only shabu but also the marked money used by PDEA to purchase that they had sold the drug to PDEA agents.

Earlier, the PDEA legal division asked Villanueva to reconsider his decision, saying the court could not have enjoined prosecutors to oppose the motion filed by detainee Joel Tingas because they (PDEA and the prosecutors) did not even receive a notice of hearing on the motion.

Mendoza is now ...

From page A1

resigned and should leave their public offices March 2.

Ermita said Ms Arroyo had drawn up her list of replacements as early as Feb. 22 when the high court upheld the anti-turncoat ruling of election rules.

The Commission on Elections had ruled that appointive officials were considered automatically resigned upon the filing of their certificates of candidacy.

"Since then, the President has been studying who should replace who in Cabinet," Ermita said in a regular Malacañang briefing. However, Ms Arroyo withheld announcing her choices.

"That is the style of the President—she places her cards close enough to her chest since she wants to keep [the] surprise in the Cabinet," Ermita said.

Also detailed resigned were Justice Secretary Agnes Devanadera, Presidential Management Staff (PMS) Director General Julia Abad, Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, Social Welfare and Development Secretary Esperanza Cabral, Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Lito Atienza, Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap and Secretary Edgar Pestaños of the Urban Land Reform Office.

Except for Devanadera, the Cabinet officials had turned in their resignation letters.

All are running for a seat in Congress except for Gonzales and Pestaños, who are seeking local positions to their hometowns.

Turnover next week

The Cabinet officials are expected to "wind down their activities" before the weekend for a smooth turnover next week, Ermita said.

Ms Arroyo appointed Solicitor General Alberto Agra as acting justice secretary, Maritime Industry Authority Administrator Ma. Elena Bautista as PMS director general and Undersecretary Jorge Sibulo Wenas, as Subic director general.

She is eyeing Deputy Executive Secretary and Presidential Anti-Graft Commissioner Nicolas Oplas to replace Gonzalez as chief presidential legal counsel, Ermita said.

The President is also considering Deputy Executive Secretary Joaquin Lagunzad Jr. to assume Andaya's post. She had earlier named Agriculture Undersecretary Bernardo Fondevilla as a substitute for Yap, Ermita said.

There is no replacement yet for Devanadera. In the series of resigned Cabinet officials whose replacements have not been named yet, their undersecretaries are expected to assume their posts, Ermita said.

Announcement of the resignations of Cabinet officials after the high tribunal denied such bids by election lawyer Romulo Macalintal to reconsider its Feb. 23 ruling.

Confidence, loyalty

Ms Arroyo, who is stepping down on June 30 and is herself seeking a congressional seat, "personally handpicked" Members to be the new executive secretary, according to Ermita.

"It is a position of confidence. Somebody who has the President's confidence, some degree of confidence to be dealing with and someone that the President has confidence to help her and bring in the Cabinet together and that is the main job of executive secretary," he said.

"She wants to have a smooth administration of the President in her petticoats, competency, loyalty and reliability," he said.

Mendoza previously headed the Philippine National Police and served for nine years as Supreme Court chief administrative officer.

Ermita, however, could not say if Mendoza would also act as presidential spokesperson.

Big challenge

Mendoza called his new post as "a very big challenge, a big departure from where he came from."

He told reporters he was "always confident, I always follow orders."

Mendoza yesterday attended the Court Council's decongestion program in connection with the recent amendment into law of Republic Act No. 9999, the "Court Fund Act of 2009."

The Court Fund will now be attached to the Department of Transportation and Communications to ensure the safety of maritime transport and navigation.

In his speech at the yearend Philippine Economic Briefing at Dusit Thani Hotel in Makati City, Ms Arroyo acknowledged Sarkozy and Yap for their contributions to the government.

She thanked Sarkozy for his presentations relevant, and Yap for the extension of 1.8 million jobs in agriculture. With a report from Jerry E. Esplanada

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Brownouts, no brownouts, brownouts ...

From page A1

of 226 megawatts (MW) as a result of the breakdown of the 150-MW Cebaco Unit 2 in Batangas and the 260-MW Sta. Rita standby bit, also in Batangas.

On Monday, up to three hours rotating brownouts for Luzon and Metro Manila because of the breakdowns of three power units on Sunday and Friday.

NGCP assured residents on Tuesday that Luzon would enjoy a sufficient power supply with the repair of final Unit 2 in Pagbilao and Cebaco Unit 1 in Batangas, and the tapping of electricity from the Wesplus.

The Visayas power grid, however, suffered a 20-MW deficit yesterday. Mindanao's power outlook continued to worsen.

Supply problems to continue

Energy Secretary Angelo T. Reyes yesterday said Luzon would continue to expect power supply problems due to the "continuing deterioration of the water levels," which has adversely affected hydroelectric power plants.

In a report, NGCP said the outages in Luzon were compounded by the breakdown of the 300-MW Mindoro-Unit 1 in Limbuhan.

NGCP said the Mindoro unit had developed operations since Feb. 26. Plant owner and operator SEM-Calaca Power Corp. has tentatively scheduled for March 7 the completion of repair work at the plant.

EMCO Holdings Inc.'s Cebaco Unit 1 has been operational since Tuesday and is providing 162 MW to the Luzon grid.

However, the coal-fired Cebaco Unit 2, which previously provided 146 MW, was shut down yesterday due to technical problems.

First Gas' Sta. Rita plant

Module 3B of First Gas Power Corp.'s Sta. Rita plant is undergoing recommissioning after a major breakdown on March 2.

First Gas said hydroelectric power plants were running with limited capacities due to low water levels at reservoirs.

Reyes said the government was closely monitoring hydropower facilities, particularly the Caliraya-Botocan-Kalayaan units in Laguna, which, according to him, should have been generating about 700 MW.

"If the water level continues to go down, we might be experiencing some difficulties in Luzon because of the continuing deterioration of the water level in Kalayaan," Reyes said on the sidelines of an economic briefing.

Maintenance

NGCP said the two units of the Kalayaan hydroelectric plant were running at 132 MW each. A third unit is unavailable because of the low water level at the Caliraya Lake.

The Caliraya unit is undergoing maintenance while the Botocan power plant is only generating 16 MW, less than half of its 20-MW installed capacity, according to NGCP.

In Isabela, the Magat hydroelectric plant was reported to be generating only 10 MW instead of 90 MW.

In the Visayas, the NGCP said Cebu Energy Development Corp.'s coal power plant was generating only 21 MW. It was providing the grid with 52 MW when a broke down on Tuesday night.

The plant, which was newly constructed, is the grid before the breakdown, was undergoing technical tests.

Subsidiary's Cebu Thermal Power Plant Unit 1 and Unit 2 are fully operational, registering 48 MW and 58 MW, respectively.

Shortfall of 510 MW

In the Mindanao grid, the identified was reported to 514 MW at 8 a.m. yesterday, which digitally went down to 499 MW at 1:30 p.m.

The huge deficit was largely due to the low generating capacity of hydroelectric plants as a result of the dry spell.

There has been an 80-percent reduction in the generating capacity of Agus hydroelectric power plants and a 90-percent reduction in the capacity of the Pulangi plant, according to NGCP.

The Agus facilities had a total capacity of 97 MW, previously operating the mixed capacity of 727 MW. The Pulangi Plant was running at only 30 MW may before its rated capacity of 255 MW.

The Bajas diesel power plant (30 MW capacity) of the state-owned National Power Corp. Diapanal and Abaka Power's power barges (by MW) are operating, but their total accounts for the Mindanao grid, NGCP said.

P5.5 B for gensets

Reyes said the government would need P5.5 billion to acquire diesel-generating units, which can provide 500 MW in the Mindanao grid. The funds, he said, could come from the Napocor budget.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has P500 million in the 2010 budget to lease power barges to boost power supply in Mindanao, according to House Speaker Prospero Pichay.

In a statement, Negrillo said this should be enough to help Mindanao in the west and the coast of the rainy season when water levels at the hydropower plants that provide half of the power supply on the island climb back to normal.

To lease power barges

He said he personally added P900 million to the budget of the National Electrification Administration in the 2010 General Appropriations Act in anticipation of the dip in power supply in Mindanao.

Negrillo said he was considering such exports on the feasibility of tapping the fund to lease two, 30-megawatt power barges to provide immediate relief to residents and businesses in Mindanao.

In Bataan City, Nacionalista Party (NP) vice presidential candidate Loren Legarda suggested that the mothballed power plants in Bataan, Manila, be tapped.

Legarda made the proposal when she met with officials of NGCP and the Aguasdel Norte Electric Cooperative (Anseo) before she and NP standard-bearer Manuel Villar left the city en route to Tuguegarao City.

With reports from Giel Cabacungan and Richard Lim Uber

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JPE tags Angara as Villar's secret emissary to Gordon

From page A1

the rebuttal on the video complaints involving the C-5 controversy, having been signed by 11 senators with myself as the author and, as chairman, he died of staff related to me by phone that another senator, whom Villar was supporting to replace me as senate president, had approached Senator Gordon to join the plot to oust me and install a new leadership in the Senate.

"As things developed and the re-perpetrators of the coup plot against me began to show their real colors, I reminded that the emissary or Senator Gordon and Senator Villar's nominee could be no other than Sen. Edgardo Angara."

Estrella said Angara had "feigned ignorance of the plot and "professed loyalty" to him.

"But Chavez first found from the senators themselves who signed the resolution to remove me that he was Villar's nominee as my replacement," Estrella said.

Angara, however, said Estrella's statement was "an absolute lie."

"That's false and unjustified," he said on the phone. "I never talked to Senator Gordon on any of these matters."

Villar's denial

As for Estrella's claim that he was to have been installed as Senate president by Villar's camp, Angara wondered why he was being blamed for Villar's moves.

"That's [Villar's] thinking. That's his matter. It's nonsensical to attribute to me [Villar's] statements," Angara said.

Villar has denied sending an emissary to Gordon.

Over radio dzMM yesterday, Gordon himself denied that the emissary was a fellow senator.

But he continued to refuse to name the emissary and said Villar should have him on his could do so.

He challenged Villar to take a lie detector test with Senate no who between them was lying.

Gordon also said the emissary instructed him "not to tell Estrella that I talked to you."

With a report from Evelyn C. Estrellado

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OPINION

Election 'high'

THE GOOD NEWS IS, AS PRESIDENTIAL candidates seems to be funded by drug money. The bad news: at the local level, in certain areas, illegal drugs continue to be the gift that keeps on giving. The issuance of the 2013 "international narcotics control strategy report" by the US Department of State crains the spotlight, once again, on the practice now known simply as narco-politics.

EDITORIAL In the Philippines, the term came into popular use at the start of the decade, when Victor Corpus, then the chief of military intelligence, and Panfilo Lacson, then a first-term senator, crossed swords in a high-profile controversy. It has resurfaced every now and then, like a recurring nightmare, albeit one that seemed less apparent or less urgent than the haunting specter of looming politics. But the influence of drug money is real; it makes business sense for operators to place or keep friendly politicians in office, and during elections not too many politicians bother to return cash donations.

Having said that, we would like to point out that the US document, which "describes the efforts of key countries to attack all aspects of the international drug trade in Calendar Year 2012," is dependent on local sources of information. This explains the lang phrasing of the following headline-grabbing statement: "With the upcoming 2013 elections, there is fear that illicit narcotics funds may affect election results." It does not specify who expressed the fear. Is it the US government itself, or certain informants in the Philippines, or analysts on either side of the Pacific? Several paragraphs later, the attribution becomes clear: "PDEA has publicly expressed fears that illicit narcotics money could influence the 2010 elections, and has pledged to pursue any evidence of such influence in order to be able to carry out arrests." In other words, it was the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency that raised the possibility that "the 2010 elections" (without the distinction, the phrase applies to the national races too) could be influenced by drug money.

Indeed, the existence of the total size of the illegal drugs trade did not come from the US State Department either. "According to the PDEA director general, the value of illegal drugs trafficked in the Philippines reads $6.4 to $6.4 billion annually," we read at the top of page S09 of the first volume of the report.

Why is this dependence on local sources important? Because it is vital to realize that the Philippines will win the war on illegal drugs, or lose it, on its own resources. The US government, glamorized by Hollywood, does not in fact have the resources to solve our drug problems for us. It doesn't even know what the situation is; it is dependent on our own government agencies. Thus, we read statements like this: "While ethnic Chinese criminal organizations continue to dominate the upper echelons of drug-trafficking organizations in the Philippines, to their connections with Embassy counterparts, PDEA, MIS and other law enforcement authorities have alleged that ethnic Muslim Filipinos are involved in street-level distribution operations."

This is not to belittle the assistance the US government continues to provide; we only wish to emphasize that the United States does not have a privileged view of the drug menace in the Philippines.

Another, perhaps more significant reason why the dependence on local sources of information is important: There is nothing in the US document about the widespread allegations of "official" backing for the illegal drugs trade to players like Mayor Jalosjos. Indeed, we read: "No known senior official of the GRP [government of the Republic of the Philippines] engages in, encourages, or facilitates the illicit production or distribution of narcotic or psychotropic drugs or other controlled substances, or the laundering of proceeds from illegal drug transactions. Several active and former politicians and officials have been implicated in drug trafficking and money laundering, but have yet to be formally charged." And yet the very narco-politics the PDEA warns us about can only mean that "active" officials are, at the very least, abetting the trade. Or does the PDEA think that narco-politics is practiced only by those who are out of power?

The drug menace is real, and the threat it poses to the 2013 vote, especially in some local races, is serious. It's up to affected constituents to put a stop to the practice.

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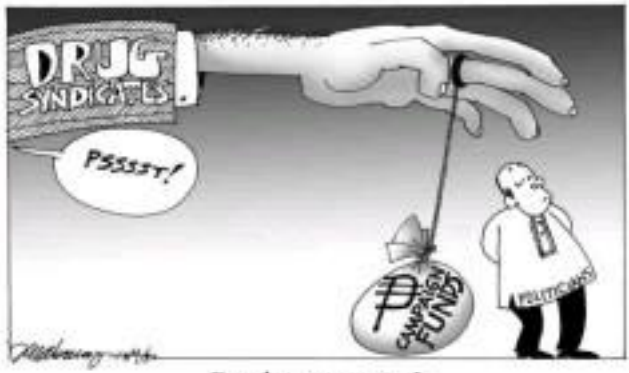

Restless corpses?

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

IS THERE A CONTROVERSIAL STATE FUNERAL that should be set? Not surprise soon. And the latest drawn-out contest won't be for whomever has pass.

Yes, said candidates Manuel Villar in Cebu and Gilbert Teodoro in Tarlac on Jan. 8 elected president, both are "open to finally burying" Ferdinand Marcos' cadaver at Libingan ng Mga Bayani. That'd bring closure to an issue that has festered since 1986.

Ms. Arroyo assigned candidate Benigno Aquino III, "Kidapawan is reserved for heroes." Thumping on ribbon won't bring Marcos to many abuses, from repression to rampant hypocrisy." Aquino's parents were authentic heroes. Neither demanded Libingan plots.

The controversy over Marcos' "restless corpse" however, ignited by the campaign?

By happenstance, the BBC is now airing Yusef Stalin's farmers." Stalin and Hitler were dictators. They remain one in some. Marcos in Davao. Stalin in Georgia. Like Mao Zedong, their embalmed cadavers were propped in mausoleums: Marcos in Baliw, Mao in Tiananmen Square and Stalin in Red Square, next to Vladimir Lenin, starting 1953.

In 1961, Stalin's corpse vanished. Nikita Khrushchev's secret speech, denouncing Stalin's crimes, had leaked. Stalin's aides ourlived in a small obscure niche in the Kremlin Wall necropolis.

People Power threw Marcos into Hawaiian exile. He died from lupus complications in 1989. The new administration agreed to his body's return in 2003.

In her book, "The Political Uses of Dead Bodies," Columbia University anthropologist Katherine Verdery names than Lenin's embalmer and Prime Lazar's bones, which were paraded in parts of Yugoslavia claimed by Serbs, are "powerful symbols... They are envied by populational mobs, intensified in times of great upheaval." Sometimes they were national heirlooms.

One of them "psychological needs" calls for bones to be interred in hallowed ground.

Those shrines include Singapore's Bengji Memorial, Nanjo's Nobi Ilaito de Luzviki, Gettysburg and Arlington Cemeteries in the US and Libingan ng Mga Bayani. Their shared theme resonates in the Bolivian Simón Meléndez plaque: "Where You Go Home, Tell Them And Say: For Their Tomorrow, We Gave Our Today."

Joseph Estrada never thought in such terms. As a mere vice president, he casually agreed to a Libingan state funeral for Marcos. The firestorm it triggered shell-shocked Erap. "The pomp of (state) funerals has more regard for vanity of the living than honor of the dead," French writer Francois de la Rochefoucauld could have told him.

Libingan is not just another memorial park, former Justice Jurgani Cruz notes in "That uneasy feeling." It is a place "where none but heroes lie."

Even before he assumed the presidency, Erap advocated the burial of Marcos in Libingan. Cruz recalled. "He backtracked when people angrily protested."

Today, Marcos' cadaver is ringed by fuchia, bougainvillea, white sampaguita and asters in the Ilocos mausoleum. "There are no yellow flowers," the historian notes. A Libingan burial, Imelda Marcos insists, is the deceased's by right.

But "time and the tide wait for no man," Scottish dramatist, A Doe society, restored by People Power, unraveled the manufactured myth of Marcos leading marauding Maharlika guerrillas.

"In no time did the army occupies that country, designating itself as Maharlika, even acted as a guerrilla force in the years of Japanese occupation 1942 to 1945," the New York Times' Jeff Gerth and Joel Brinkley wrote. "The immorality of Mr. Marcos' claim that Maharlika served the entire nation was absurd." The 37 war medals were merely bogus.

A number of Red Santiago claimed that Capt. Ferdinand E. Marcos was among those imprisoned by Kempeitai there. Sonsuine, wrote the late Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus who was imprisoned in the fort. Marcos was never there. Nor did he fight at Bessang Pass. The spoils of the war here collapsed, the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism reports.

In Davao Norte, "old folk still oversee the oldest shrines," the historian notes. "But young Dusaleo are struggling whether to continue loyalty or change."

What matters to the youth is how our leaders get out economic meaning, not moving the body of the late president," Laong high school senior Clarissa Ishmie says. "In the heart of Dusaleo, he was a hero."

Retired state Sunset Court justice "Because have strong memories."

That view nevertheless requires the others have different memories. They should also be appreciated. Here is one:

"When World War II erupted, my younger brother was a fighter pilot," the late Nicholas Manuntag recalled in an open letter to Brig. Lt. Gen. Emmanuel Mendiola (Ret.) to Capt. Jesus Villamor's squadron.

"Rading and others fought in obsolete P-26 planes against modern Japanese Zeroes. He was killed in action.

"He never had a Swiss bank account. Nor did he ever visit Lasuda. All he had is a one-bland room in Villamor Airbase that bears his name, plus a cubicle-grave.

"Now, you'll have more to him, as a hero, someone whom the Common Book of Heroes credits for massive theft and spun a myth with impudence."

That, too, is memory.

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(Email: jvantmercado@gmail.com)

Signs

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THERE'S AN ASTONISHING SIGN AT THE foot of the footbridge connecting SM North to West Avenue spanning Edsa. Except that nobody finds it astonishing. Certainly I haven't read or heard anyone comment on it in the newspapers or TV and radio. In fact I haven't heard anyone comment on it in conversation.

That sign comes in the form of a streamer that says, "Solemn po Nagsilang Cloria Maria, pagod dyan sa footbridge na yan!" (Thank you President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for this footbridge!)

I have seen that sign not just on the footbridge of EDSA but on the various footbridges that dot the major avenues of Metro Manila. There's one in Quezon Avenue near Mayon and several in Edsa.

I gather that is part of GMA's campaign to solicit either her accomplishments before she leaves. Or before she messes up the elections with an automation system that is guaranteed to mess up the elections, and remains in power. But this sign takes the cake.

I saw it one night last week, when the traffic in the area was especially bad when it really shouldn't be like that merely parked in the middle of the road and allow rickshaw made a U-turn in front of Trinoma, leaving us base for those going straight ahead; and I was inflicted by the sight of the inappropriate sign of the writers who used to mount blistering attacks in the night, putting signs on walls, called pasquinades because their words of protest were painted in red-on-old newspapers. If they were around, they might have painted a sign similar to the streamer that declares:

"Dyosmiha, lightning bolt, hypocrite strokes, exclamations point(s) mo, di mo pwa yan, para sunan sun!"

In fact, I would encourage everyone, activist or not, to put such a sign in whatever form—posters, streamers, graffiti, etc.—above or below the footbridges they use regularly. Still in fact, I would encourage the Supreme Court to declare such an act completely legal—and not a further act of vandalism—if they do not have the balls to declare the original banning mechanism unconstitutionally illegal.

There's GMA's legacy right there, in plain view of the world. "Is any base reasonable it is, imagine a sign that says, "Salamat po Nagsilang Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo sa aming buhay!" In the first place, what's reasonable about it is saying "thanks" because she is not. She is merely the un-twisted squatter of Malacañang for the last nine years. In the second place, what's reasonable about it is that she does not earn our life, nor do. She do not exist by the grace of her, or at her sufferance. Our life is our own. It is not hers to do with as she pleases.

So are taxes. What built that footbridge are our taxes. What built that footbridge is the US pressure the Marcos dictator from my hard-earned pay (if you don't think that's hard-earned, try writing every day), which pisses me off no end but which I can't do anything about. What built that footbridge are the various measures the government officers squeeze off from us every time we need to process an official document, like a driver's license, like a new car license license, like a license for a mall or a wet market, selling slaughtered pig. What built that footbridge is the fortune being ripped off from us every time we buy something, which is what the EVAT is for, which is the colossal town for highway robbery.

The old signs were bad enough, the ones that said, "This bridge is being built courtesy of Mayor Pogoso," or "This road repair is being done courtesy of Governor Swapang." They made a case only for the public treasury being the private piggybank of the mayor or governor with the call for gratitude from their constituents being implicit. This one is brazenly forthright. "Salamat po Nagsilang Gloria." It conjures the image of Juan de la Cruz kneeling down before the source of his benediction, bowing his head, and pushing forth unwitting gratitude. No wonder there's an epidemic of strokes in this country. Maybe that's what the signs are meant to do.

Assistance for what? For voting a vote back to us, like watch-word-for-hire, from the 40 billion treasure in EVAT and unprecedented borrowing since Marcos stole from us? For using our money the way it ought to be used?

There and there, you see why corruption thrives in this country. It is not just because our public officials are greedier than others...although a case can always be made for it, their levels of moral opprobrium arguing for changing our name to Lucknow Islands. It is not because our voters have to stand—after Marcos and Macapagal, who haven't just stolen our present and our future but our bodies and souls, heaven knows what else their successors will have left in steal.

It is because we allow our public officials to get away with it. We allow our public officials to steal from us because we do not see that they are stealing from us.

We presume that taxes are not money that are carved in the hands of our public officials at that they turn votes them to us in roads and bridges, but money that they give to the public officials the way serfs give their harvest to their lords and the way monks give tithes to their conquerors. We presume that taxes are not the wealth produced by our toil that should bring light to the minds of our children in books and classrooms, from you-and-me that naturally belongs to the old and sorrowful, plunder simply bring their way, or game, of educating it from the hands of the one to the other. We presume that when we see signs like the one at the footbridge linking SM and West Avenue we should not feel that we are being flogged like a dog and ordered to stop whining, when in fact we should be bending at the top of our lungs in pain and anger.

And showering words filled with execration, lightning bolts, hypocotic circles and exclamation points.

Beyond symbols in Himalayan setting

MY LEADERS AND I GOOSESTEP TO MYSTICAL flatbreads, Nepal, in the foothills of the Himalayas even the weekend to join former Speaker Jose de Venecia at the 12th meeting of the Standing Committee of the International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP). He founded ICAPP in September 2000 in Manila two years after losing the presidential election to Joseph Estrada, and since we were in full support of that Manila conference, I was among the 100-hundred "Founding" list invited as well (Dr. College of Law-Jose Attado to Hidden and his wife Bella).

JDV and co-chair Chung Ion-yong, former head of the South Korean Islamic Foreign relations committee, had envisioned ICAPP to be a think-tank for political parties to be "honest brokers" in the global power process, by sharing with conflict-ridden nations their countries' experiments with peaceful and quasi-violent transition of leadership, and to work for the political and economic integration and stability of the region. From a handful of political parties in 2000, ICAPP has grown to its first decade to 262 parties in 51 countries of Greater Asia and recently Latin American and Africa.

* * *

I welcomed the opportunity to travel to Nepal, not only as a respite from covering the political campaign back home, but also because it has always been my dream to visit the land at the cradle of seven of the world's highest mountain peaks, led by Mt. Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest to the world). It was a grand time to be in Kathmandu, the city-capital sprung seven feet just before we arrived. We caught the third Festival celebrated throughout the Hindu world, during which locals and some brave tourists painted themselves in all colors, drank and danced in the streets and even threw water on another (to publicly welcome the arrival of spring).

* * *

The decision of the ICAPP Standing Committee to hold its 13th meeting in this small country despite the backwardness of its infrastructure and comparative inaccessibility, was meant to be more than just symbolic. The meeting, attended by representatives of political parties from all over Greater Asia, including those from the ruling parties of Japan and Russia, and Gustavo Carvajal Moreno, the president for life of the grand alliance of Latin American Centrist political parties, tackled some matters such as fixing the venue of the general assembly this November in Cambodia.

But the not-too-subtle goal of ICAPP in coming to Nepal was to apply pressure on its government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal of the Communist Party of Nepal United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), and the other political parties to save the Government of Nation of Unity. This was forged in Nov. 21, 2006, after the overthrow of the autocratic rule of King Gyanendra that ended 240 years of monarchic rule.

* * *

The transition to full democratic rule remains critical as serious fears of communist politicians vie for dominance, even though they are all supposedly committed to the democratic electoral process. In preparation for the April elections, conflicts have some kind of coexistence in a unique political arrangement: the CPN-UML, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal Maoist, led by former Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dhal who uses the nomdeguerre Prachanda, and the Congress Party of Nepal, led by former Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, to submit the incumbent President Ram Baran Yadav belongs. As a journalist used to the subterfuges of our Left-wing politicians and dissidents, I found the splitting of units by communists fascinating. But that's what makes the Nepali situation unique. Our homegrown politicians could learn a few things from them.

* * *

In reality the relationship between the Maoist Leninists and the Maoists is far from being smooth. The Maoist Leninists control 40 percent of the 601-member Constituent Assembly, necessitating a coalition with the Congress Party that controls another 20 percent and other smaller groups. On the other side is the Maoist group which controls a similar 40 percent. The Maoists have the power, however, late in its control of the 19,000 members armed forces that dates back from anti-monarchy days. Some people think this number is bloated and that it is more like 11,000. At the moment, these Maoist forces are "cantoned" and their firearms were locked, pending integration into the government forces. The United Nations has been supporting their indoctrination with funds channeled through the Maoist party, but the Maoists don't like this arrangement since it puts a lot of dollars into Maoists' hands that could be used against them.

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The situation for Maoist PM Nepal remains critical, as neutral Prachanda is said to be backing after his old job. Nepal's leaders also cannot agree on the type of government they want. A new constitution is supposed to be drafted and finished before May 28, 2010, or the result has been nine. Observers say the first step to stabilizing is the smooth integration of Maoist troops into the 83,000-strong government forces, but this needs a lot of legislation. De Venecia stressed that the Philippines has integrated 7,200 former rebel troops of the Moro National Liberation Front in its initially integrated into the armed forces, and this would be a model for Nepal.

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This beautiful Himalayan country has a long way to go before achieving political stability. The ICAPP leaders have called on CPN Secretary-General Bin Bir Mora to visit Nepal and extend UR assistance to avert the country's descent into another's deadline. They also exhorted him to dialogue with the various politicians at the Asian parliamentarians we have just done. For only by working together through elections and parliamentary tradition, and not through violent coups as in the past, could Nepal show stability and convince foreign investors to come in with badly needed infrastructure and even basic industries like cement factories.

Confession of a highwayman

THE MURDER A FEW DAYS AGO OF RICHMOND contractor Wilfredo "Boy" Mayor (2009 [saying whistleblower]) by what appeared to be hired killers may gave rise to speculations about what he might have known about shady deals in the administration of public works. The victim, arrested 22 bullets into Mayor's Volvo 850, He had just come from the casino.

Those who knew Mayor say the murder may not be connected with his having past ties with his former employer and getting in the way of those who wanted juicy projects.

I don't know Mayor from Adam. I have no idea who did/ordered. What I know is that public works is a money machine, but which the words of stomach would have to tend.

Years ago, I sat down with a highway engineer whose relative/in-law was asking favor that regularly bidding for huge government projects. He agreed to be interviewed for me Sunday magazine issue as confession.

Caught in the web of corruption that plagued government infrastructure projects, the engineer admitted to having participated in the evil system but wished he didn't and had a choice.

I highwayman is a person who robs travelers on a road.

The engineer didn't tell but he was a member of the cast of characters in the highway robbery that went on in the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH). I don't remember his face, his name. And if he's reading this, I hope he could still find it in his conscience to tell the story of the evil he helped but this is what he said at that time:

The DPWH is a perfectly departmentalized system of corruption. Every office or department where your paper passes it will be set up to help you. Most of the time, you're unaware that the department the garbage [inside] and the Mr. Clean types. The garbage dudes is killing by dealing with contractors directly. The Mr. Clean types are IGMs who are there supposedly to keep the DPWH honest.

In the prequalification stage before the bidding, people in the department will find ways to disqualify you. Those are among the most corrupt. They check on your financial state, equipment capabilities, engineering capacities and experience. Then they try to find faults, wanting for you to pay your way through them. Those people are underpaid.

Then are rigged bids. People in the department sell estimates to bidders. There is no way for me but to participate in the scheme. If there are five of us bidding, I talk to the other four to tell them that I am. Then I tell the estimate that I give one an estimate. I pick up my bid by five pesos, but my bid would still be the lowest because I have already made the other four bidders.

That four pesos is the margin with that will be divided into five and distributed among the four "losing" bidders and the estimate. So, the five of them earned money without having to do actual construction work. I am the one who still do the actual work.

I want to echo Ms. Chan but here can I? They'll steal some of your papers and give you a rough time to draw you down.

There is also what you call a "price escalation commodities."

It takes time for us to collect. Our receivables are sitting on the desks. A lot of our money goes out, just so we can collect. I still have collectibles and they're being validated. They think they're burying me. They're burying their people.

How do we react to close up the system? If I were the one to do I would get people inside who are also SOBs but who would put it a good cost for motion. The one inviting a good guy who is knowledgeable is just living to burn. His motive is to get more fun to be professionalized; employees have to be given good salaries. That means spending more, but in the end government will profit from it, as there will be less stealing of money that is supposed to go to the government. I really wish corporations would get rumours at the right price before signing.

As it is, indirectly the government is losing billions of those shady deals. Money goes to the people who are in the know and kickbacks. The government loses, too, the unfortunate directions.

Oh yes, I've personally delivered as much as P5 million—cash cash—in one blow. You don't find normal company employees here are marked bills. There's some kind of code of honor here. You break that and you're finished. Interesting enough, everyone stay submitted.

How do all these come out in my books? Ah, I will not tell you. But I promise there are three types: the rich, the stupid and those who refuse to make money.

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In the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Rigoberto Tiglao pointed out that "As Philippine elections have become increasingly costly, they have encouraged politicians to become more creative in raising funds, whether through the promise of legislative and regulatory favors to real estate developers, or more in gambling syndicates, or links to drug lords and the underworld. In a surprisingly candid moment, Speaker Jose de Venecia said of the system: 'It's the drug lords and the gambling lords who finance the candidates.' Former Chief Justice Davide Jr. also has become outraged. In the earlier political process to retire." In February 2009, when spectacular bank robberies were hogging the headlines, I recalled Mon Magno's reminder that the primary sources of illegal money in the Philippines are: (1) Gambling money; (2) Opium or marijuana and internal revenue bureaus; (4) The Philippine National Police.

The Manila Luminous control 30 percent of the 601-member Government assembly, necessitating a coalition with the Congress Party that controls another 20 percent and other smaller groups. On the other side is the Maoist group which controls a similar 40 percent. The Maoists have the power, however, late in its control of the 19,000 members armed forces that dates back from anti-monarchy days. Some people think this number is bloated and that it is more like 11,000. At the moment, these Maoist forces are "cantoned" and their firearms were locked, pending integration into the government forces. The United Nations has been supporting their indoctrination with funds channeled through the Maoist party, but the Maoists don't like this arrangement since it puts a lot of dollars into Maoists' hands that could be used against them.

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In 2008, the Drug Third Wave began to worry of the influence big-time drug lords would have on the 2010 elections. In January 2009, three Caripito and editorials in this paper and in the Negros Chronicle pointed out pretty much the same thing. Last July, Rufus Rodriguez tipped off his brother about Aaron Aquino's connection with the rough CIA-chief Leon Pinatta, about drug money being used to finance terrorism. At the time, Sumsuddin commanded illegal drugs to be a $7.5 billion a year industry, the State Department report estimated it at $8.4 billion or $8.4 billion annually.

But that's just one looming head of a many headed Hydra menacing the democracy.

In the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Rigoberto Tiglao pointed out that "As Philippine elections have become increasingly costly, they have encouraged politicians to become more creative in raising funds, whether through the promise of legislative and regulatory favors to real estate developers, or more in gambling syndicates, or links to drug lords and the underworld. In a surprisingly candid moment, Speaker Jose de Venecia said of the system: 'It's the drug lords and the gambling lords who finance the candidates.' Former Chief Justice Davide Jr. also has become outraged. In the earlier political process to retire." In February 2009, when spectacular bank robberies were hogging the headlines, I recalled Mon Magno's reminder that the primary sources of illegal money in the Philippines are: (1) Gambling money; (2) Opium or marijuana and internal revenue bureaus; (4) The Philippine National Police.

Being Jane

I WENT INTO THIS WHOLE SCHOOLTIME THING TO FIND my Tarzan. I ended up finding myself.

A few months before flying to Hong Kong to work, someone asked me, "What do you plan to do there?"

"Oh," I answered, "Perhaps I'll visit Disneyland and find my Tarzan."

My friend laughed off my silly remark. "You're kidding, right?" he said.

"Yes," I said with the straightest face possible. "I'm sure he's out there somewhere. He has probably evolved out of his loincloth and is now looking for his Jane."

The joke was that perhaps I would finally meet my Tarzan, the hunk of a guy who would literally and figuratively sweep me off my feet. Maybe—just maybe—when overseas, I'd change and meet people and shed'ded in front of your eyes, the man of your dreams sort of materializes before you.

So after I packed my bags and hopped on the plane, I looked into the first mirror I could find, and said to myself, "Cloud, you're going to find the love of your life." I was very sure I would find someone who would swing above the treetops to be with me.

That's where the joke ends, though not the banter.

One thing I realized during the last two years of being away from home is that wherever we go (if searching for something, we never find what we started the search for. We find something better than we ever hoped.

Surprisingly, in spite of the fact that I was free to do what ever I wanted, had I an Xtra Long (Hong Kong's night life district) a name into away and was surrounded by people as diverse that they would do the United Colors of Benetton campaign proud, I found that I preferred the peace and quiet of home to the late night parties of the city.

And that's fit me. There is so much romance in being alone.

Here's you ever tried going off to the bay and watching the sunset, without ever thinking that you need someone to share it with? Have you ever tried getting lost in a jungle of people, only to find that the noise outside does not drown the strong force of your silent thoughts? Have you ever tried to camp searching for four everywhere else, and began to realize that you have all that you need with and around you?

It's weird and crazy way, I admit I have.

And for the past few months, I have also still so much room in grow, a lot of experience to learn from, and time to discover who I am, and who I would like in to. And that's the whole point: to love another person, you must know how to be one. And that only happens when you have had enough time to figure out your own life.

I am still in that process. And well, yes, once or twice I actually considered that Tarzan I went away—and once or twice I may have shed tears of frustration. But as the end of the day, I realized that nothing and no one should come between me and my heart. We all choose to risk—and we all should. Because risk tests our courage, and pain strengthens our resiliency.

But at the end of the day, we all come to the discovery that our heart is our true priorities. And at our point in time, we have to make it stop searching, hold it still and remember that love does not mean to be found. It finds us.

And it will find you.

Don't be frustrated if no one seems to want the heart you are putting out there. Someone in the universe deserves it... and in the right time, he will be rewarded to you.

Don't worry about finding your Tarzan. Be open to people who still not sure for what it's worth. Instead, hold it and nurture it. Nurture the love inside you, and save it for the person worth giving it to. And when that person comes, you will be so happy you gave it whole—without the scratches—and lovingly nourished by all the pauses you have spent on searching for a better person. Let no one ever tell that you might have settled for less. Because, hell, rather than not right the right person for that person destined to be with us for the rest of our lives.

Call me hopeless, but I believe it's true. You don't have to wait for Tarzan. After all, he might still be figuring out whether he wants to swill on two feet—or four limbs. (And what would you do while the monkey contemplates his life?) But as long as you find the Jane inside of you, you will never be afraid to swing through all this.

Jane, you've been told. And you're going to be just fine!

Cloud Cinconegh, 23, is a Filipino performing artist currently working in Hong Kong. She originally wrote this as a Valentine's Day correspondent, and found that it appealed to many young singles.

Notice to Youngblood contributors

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school, course and your year/s enrolled in or, if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

They Said

What change?

"The question this campaign has on for Ilocos presidency: anything? Did [you] change something in the past? It is important to establish that when you say that you will change ... you are really capable [of doing it]."

—Sen. Manuel Villar Jr., on fellow presidential aspirant Senator Noynoy "Aquino III's platform of hope and change"

Where were you?

"When push came to shove, where were you? What have you done? Do you be is not a person who easily picks a fight, but when can use the silence to the utmost... does it not make you want to stand up and say enough is enough?!"

—Presidential candidate Bayan "Bayan" Aquino III, saying it sid Manuel Villar Jr. did not take the lead in questioning the Arroyo administration's scandals

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Worried about absentee voting

THE BOSSES TO THE NEWS AL-ERT titled "Many voters in Hong Kong, Singapore voting on May 13" (*Inquirer*, 2/15/13):

Migrants International is alarmed over the high possibility of failure of elections, widespread electoral fraud and disenfranchisement of almost 600,000 reg. overseas absentee voters (OAVs). We are particularly concerned with the manner "preparations" are being made for automated absentee voting in Hong Kong and Singapore and the postal voting in other 99 countries.

The automated absentee voting in Hong Kong and Singapore is going to be held in less than two months, but the Commission on Elections has yet to conduct mock elections and field tests in both countries. Given the major PCOS transmission glitches that marred the mock polls in Quezon City and Taguig, we are very much worried that the automated voting in Hong Kong and Singapore could lead to a failure of elections.

The Comelec has yet to begin voter education for OFWs in Hong Kong and Singapore, as well as in the Comelec and Embassy officials who will serve as board of election inspectors (BEIs) in the two countries. How can we be assured of an informed election when the Instructions/rules do not have voter-productive knowledge of an activity now extinct?

We believe that 31 PCOS machines allowed for Hong Kong and Singapore will not be enough. The automated balloting will run for a month, thus the need for the Comelec to send more could by machines per in-case-many PCOS machines break down.

The Comelec's planned postal voting in 43 countries is also redundant to absentee voting. The reason will have no means to verify their votes after they cast their ballots and send them by mail for counting and canvassing. Just like in the "Garci" days, this dumps regime will be having a whole month's opportunity to manage and manipulate the votes sent through mail. Because of this, OFWs have more than enough reasons to suspect that the Aquino regime is deliberately looking forward to a massively and chaotic voting in Hong Kong and Singapore. Of course, disorderly and chaotic voting is the ruse DFA-Comelec-rich countries would endorse done by fourth administration con. debacle as both countries have with DFA's who are disposed with and works to Aquino regime. In the past two elections, OFWs in Hong Kong have declared the biggest British colony as a "No-vote for Gloria and allies" zone.

We are extremely alarmed, given the fact that the sheer number of OFWs in Hong Kong, Singapore and "postal voting" countries constitutes almost half of the entire number of OFWs worldwide (740,838), according to the Comelec.

To this, Sirs, we entreat our global media to safeguard our votes. We have fought long and hard for our right to vote in absentia. We will not allow the Aquino regime to again rob us of this right.

—GREY MARTINEZ,
chair,
Migrante International,
10 Kamagong St., Barangay Sikatuna,
Project 3, Quezon City

Contest between propaganda, truth

DURING ELECTIONS, THE voters do what is right or just because what the politicians and their media say.

Kadre has a thousand and one "scientific" and "creative" ways—familiar "successful" advertisements and endorsements to "sway" voters into voting for a candidate they don't necessarily consider to be the best, if not the right, person to be elected; just as they respond to the survey questions, "Whom will you vote in the forthcoming election?" without any direct reference to their answer to another survey question, "What should be the qualities of the new president?"

The camera, therefore, is the foremost subject and acceptor, while the voter is the propagandist's stark. He spins choosing the truth, one must remain ever strong. So neither he praises nor gives most anyone he himself be swayed. Even because one not on solid grounds.

—RENOIR VILLANUEVA,
renoirvillanueva@yahoo.com

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Because of his vision,
more than 100,000 people
kept their sight.

Presenting the 4th Gawad Haydee Yorac Awardee

DR. KADIL M. SINOLINDING, JR.
Rural Doctor and Volunteer Opthalmologist

From Pinit, North Cotabato, he has opened our eyes to what service truly means. For over 19 years, Dr. Kadil M. Sinolinding, Jr. has been serving the people from Sa Ilang, war-torn communities in Mindanao – Muslims, Christians and Lumad villagers alike, in places others hesitate to visit. Through his vision 20/20 Lasik and Charities team, he has made world-class eye surgery and other opthalmological services available to everybody, especially the poor and needy long caught up in the war in Mindanao. It is this commitment to serving his countrymen with excellence, regardless of circumstances, despite the realities of war, that the Gawad Haydee Yorac recognizes. We know, as more are inspired by his example, our nation can be healed.

GAWAD HAYDEE YORAC

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Real issues in 'purchase' of Great Bakungan Island

THIS IS REGARDING THE LETTER TITLED "Ex-children bought the island, says Tsui-Tawi guy" (*Inquirer*, 12/6/'09) "Whoever bought it, the province is still accountable for the sale of it to prosecuted area.

As to the issues of Island Bakungan (Bakungan Kecil in Malaysian) as part of territorial domain of Turtle Islands, the proposition is misleading and seriously endangers the Philippine territorial integrity especially in the re-establishment of the Turtle Islands Heritage Protected Area (TIHPA).

The governor also forgot to mention—or maybe he does not know—the existence of Bagsak Island, which is part of the Marine Turtle Wildlife Sanctuary.

He said that the purchase was made in 2007, eight years after the issuance of Presidential Proclamation No. 171 in 1999 and the surveyor, Cesar L. Moreno, was a known surveyor. A private surveyor does not work for whoever engages his services but does not have the authority to title a land in favor of anybody. Today, this authority vests solely with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. In a prosecuted area, one can only be an "occupant" and cannot own or have a title to any portion, much less the whole, of it. Besides, the buyers and most of the "vendors" in the purchase can never qualify as Turtle Islands occupants, much less as owners of the prosecuted area.

Gov. Sadikul Sakuk and his children are claiming the real issues: the invasion of the island by a private army and a group of security guards who drove away the inhabitants with a volley of fire from automatic weapons; and the takeover of the island by "tourists" to replace the evacuees.

Reportedly, Governor Sakuk allowed the use of his guesthouse for the invasion and supplied the invaders their other "needs," in connivance with police elements in the locality.

Today, hundreds of families from the Great Bakungan Island are in different evacuation sites in Bulak, Malaysian, Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, Jolo, Sulu, Zamboanga City and Basilan. They are suffering from hunger and the lack of basic necessities. So, we are helping them, as the ruling family in Tawi-Tawi who are subjecting over what it has done to them.

Certainly, these issues cannot be resolved merely by news reports, commentaries and letters to the editor. The first step to take is to bring the matter to the proper bodies or, possibly, to the courts of law so that evidence can be presented and those concerned can be heard. This, however, would be risky and costly for the affected families. Should all else fail, we will call on all Filipinos for assistance in this fight between "David and Goliath."

We are now calling the affected individuals to file complaints against the concerned provincial officials. We will always be behind them.

—JAMAL KADIL,
alliance against tyrant, Corruption and Inefficient Local Officials,
Bongao, Tawi-Tawi

Military asked to review 'anti-communism line'

KUDOS TO THE *INQUIRER* FOR ITS FEB. 23 editorial titled "Reserve corps," which is about the decision of the military leadership to award the Bronze Cross to the officers who led the illegal arrest in Morong of the 43 health workers alleged to be members of the communist New People's Army.

The military has for a long time used an "anti-communism drive" to justify its abuses and push the agenda of its patrons. It has to demonized communism that some people actually see communism as completely evil even if they do not know what communism is all about.

"Communism" and "democracy" are not easy concepts. There are no simple black-and-white ideas because, in essence, both can be one same.

Nonetheless, the military's usual justification for its abuses is its anti-communism drive, in defense of democracy. Perhaps, our military needs to review this particular dictum. With its usual, illegal arrest, torture and continued detention of the 43 health workers, the military is in fact killing democracy, the very cause it is fighting for.

—JULIE L. ITO,
Umayan ng Bulatlat ng Pilipino,
jlp704@yahoo.com

Assistant Editor Tony Bengcolo

Across the NATION

Sorsogon lawmaker convicted of graft

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE ANTIGRAFT COURT SANDIGANBAYAN yesterday sentenced to up to 10 years in jail an incumbent Sorsogon congressman after finding him guilty of graft and falsification for wrongly classifying a government lot to favor a private claimant more than 10 years ago.

The court's third Division also sentenced three building official...

Guagua folk scratch heads over Gloria road

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

GUAGUA, PAMPANGA—RONDO in this town's business district on uneven and at least two lanes remained flooded since Tropical Storm "Ondoy" hit in September and even today's dry spell that has parched roads and lanes.

Some residents grumble, voicing the problem to Provincial Board Member Oyo Yano, as local officials trumpet, brought the projects to Pampanga, one of six towns in the district that she wants to represent in Congress.

Antonio Roman, president of the Guagua Stallholders Association, said he expects big...

'It's like they put us in a pond and we're like ducks on water…'

GIs pay ₱20,000 to settle Zamboanga traffic case

How can we have a case ... when the victim herself agreed to a settlement?

ZAMBOANGA CITY—TWO US servicemen received into an out-of-court settlement with the family of a 21-year-old Filipina that the car they were driving hurt but while she rode a motorcycle.

The servicemen, according to reports here, were not driving as if nothing happened, but later met with the victim's family to settle the case.

"How can we have a case against the American soldiers when the victim herself agreed to a settlement?" said Senior Supt. Edwin de Ocampo, city police chief.

Sarah Jane Tabo, the victim, was resting in the village of Guiwan on Friday when a speeding car roared past her, hitting a bump in front of her motorcycle.

Tabo's motorcycle crashed. She lost consciousness and was brought to the Western Mindanao Medical Center.

Witnesses immediately reported what they saw to police, who gave chase and caught up with the suspects at a gas station two hours later.

At the police station, the American soldiers, members of the Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines, refused to cooperate, not even pulling down their car's windows.

A certain Glenn, a Filipino-American soldier, arrived to act as interpreter.

De Ocampo said Tabo's family agreed to a settlement, but he could not say how much the victim received.

A police source said the US soldiers paid for Tabo's hospital bills and gave her P20,000.

A police blotter identified one of the soldiers as 1Lt Marine Cpl. Ric B. Wentworth. Julie-Ann Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao

Church, execs question entry of jai-alai in Cagayan ecozone

By Melvin Gascon
Inquirer Northern Luzon

SAN FRANCISCO, CAGAYAN—A Spanish-owned gaming firm has scheduled for March 10 the opening of its first jai-alai operations at the Cagayan Special Economic Zone and Freeport (CSEZFP) here, eliciting adverse reactions from Church and community leaders.

Spanish and Filipino players begins arriving at the newly-built jai-alai fronton in Barangay Espidi here, in time for the game's opening, said Raul Bandoco, operations manager of Members Value Gaming Corp. (MVGC).

The MVGC has received a gaming license from the Cagayan Economic Zone Authority (Ceza) that allows them to operate an online betting system for the televised games, Bandoco said.

He said he was not privy to the number of MVGC betting stations that would be operational on March 10 because the permit to operate online was still being processed.

A recent Cagayan court ruling allowed the MVGC to proceed with its May 10 opening, said Nilo Aldecoa, Ceza deputy administrator.

The court heard a petition that questioned whether or not the MVGC could set up betting stations outside the 54,000-hectare freeport, he said.

The court, in a hearing yesterday, ruled in favor of the MVGC, Aldecoa said.

Bishop Sergio Utleg, head of the Diocese of Tuguegarao, which has jurisdiction over San Francisco, said the Church opposes the operation of jai-alai in the province.

Utleg, however, described the online game as a supposed destruction of the illegal ones...

The MVGC officials denied this allegation.

Miguel Carmona, MVGC president, said he was optimistic that after about a month of operations, the company would start earning.

"We plan to set up betting stations all over the country, and even overseas, to cater to [overseas Filipino workers] who also want to play the game," he said.

Community leaders have not taken kindly to the jai-alai operations.

"Ours should be an agro-industrial zone due to its location, which is within an agricultural area of the country," said Mayor Ignacio Taruc of Magsaysay, who is running for a House seat.

NEWSBRIEFS

CAMARINES SUR

Masbate school burned

CLASSROOMS BURNED A THREE-CLASSROOM school building in Masbate on Monday, but the Army and police couldn't agree on who the perpetrators were.

The military said the arsonists were suspected New People's Army rebels, but police said they could be panels disgusted over the way the school was being run.

Maj. Harold Cabunoc, public information officer of the Army's 9th Infantry Division based in Pili, Camarines Sur, said the school was burned at midnight on Monday. Containers of gasoline were found in the area.

The school building has a capacity of at least 240 students, Cabunoc said, quoting a school teacher, Erma Cabinoy.

Cabunoc quoted Cabinoy as saying classes would have to be held in huts and under shades of trees.

Jesse Caldez Zafra and Mar S. Aguado, Inquirer Southern Luzon

NEGROS OCCIDENTAL

Poll machines arrive

SIXTY Precinct Count Optical Scan (PCOS) machines arrived at the Commission on Elections provincial office in Sagay City on Sunday, provincial elections officer Jessie Suarez said Monday.

The PCOS machines would be used first for the training of 4,100 board of election inspectors in Negros Occidental this month, Suarez said.

He said he expects another 30 PCOS machines to arrive within the week.

Carla P. Gomez, Inquirer Visayas

BUGIAS CITY

Cabral gets backing

A PARTY-LIST group defended Health Secretary Esperanza Cabral against criticisms on her decision to continue distributing condoms, saying it was helping poor couples prevent unwanted pregnancies but who can't afford contraceptives.

CABRAL

"Due to her new directives, poor and low-income families will see contraceptives even if she wants to limit the number of her children," said Judy Ann Miranda, secretary general of the Partidong Manggagawa.

"In poorer communities, one condom would amount to a pack of noodles. In countless tall-storied families, food would definitely come first than birth control," Miranda said in a message.

Cabral may have antagonized the Catholic Church for distributing condoms but her effort was welcomed by the labor sector, said Miranda.

Elvis Pal, Inquirer Mindanao

EVENT

Power summit urged

A SENATORIAL candidate of the administration's Lakas-Kampi-CMD urged Malacañang to call a summit involving all political parties to discuss how the government should handle the shortage of electricity in Mindanao.

Lawyer Raul Lambino, one of the administration's senatorial candidates, said in a press statement that "the Department of Energy should tell the public the truth about the real situation of the power crisis."

Lambino said all political party leaders, including candidates for president, should be invited to the summit.

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Florante G. Solmerano

FESTIVAL FACES Students of the Carmona National High School join the street dance during the opening of the Sorsogon Festival 2010 in Carmona town in Cavite. Hundreds of tourists witnessed the event, which carried the theme "Sinulog Bukid, Ang Kinabuhasan." [redacted]

Farmers win tilling rights in town raffle

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SOMECS BDO

By Marisa Cinco
Carmona, Cavite

A SPANISH COLONIAL way of having public land tilled has been revived and kept relevant in the agricultural town of Carmona in Cavite through its week-long Sorseo Festival.

Farmers can till one to two hectares of land that the municipal government is lending for three years—and earn from their toil—by submitting a lottery draw from a large receptacle (lottery drum).

The raffle of land parcels happens every Sorseo Festival, a celebration that dates back to how Carmona, then called Barangay Lanas under the municipality of Silang, became a municipality in 1857.

"It was then called Subasta dela Tierra Comunales del Pueblo de Carmona (Lottery of the Communal Lands of the Town of Carmona), which referred to a decree of Spanish Governor General Ramon Blanco that distributed the tilla fields to the original settlers of the town," Mayor Boy Loyola said.

In 2009, the municipal government looked back at history and came up with the week-long Sorseo (Raffle) Festival. This year, the raffle began on midnight of Feb. 20 and lasted for three days until the afternoon of Feb. 22.

Only those born in Carmona or had married residents, at least, are eligible to join the raffle during the Sorseo Festival

Only those born in Carmona or had married residents are eligible to join the raffle during the Sorseo Festival.

Only those born in Carmona or had married residents, at least, are eligible to join the raffle. Of the 8,738 who registered, 300 residents were awarded the lot parcels, according to Joanne Fresnedo, municipal information officer.

"One of our municipal employees won (a lot parcel) but he opted to have it auctioned for P150,000," she added.

Cash prizes were also given to 140 people.

9 planting seasons

"If you want to till the land yourself, the land can be used for three planting seasons in a year. Its chief's (title) is three years and that will earn you much more than P150,000," Fresnedo said.

After the period, the farmers will return the lots to the municipality for use in the next festival's raffle.

"The municipal government is also providing irrigation to the farmers," said former Mayor Odilia Loyola, Sorseo councilor-head, citing the threat of El Niño, an erratic weather phenomenon characterized by the sudden warming of the Pacific Ocean and long dry spell in some parts of the world, including the Philippines.

"Hopefully, we would not be much affected by it," she said.

Commercial yet agricultural

In 1998, Carmona was known as the garbage dump of Metro Manila, 26 kilometers away.

"I asked the President (former President Fidel Ramos) to close down the landfills here because Carmona was already starting to grow as an urban municipality then," Loyola said.

Carmona, with a population of about 700,000, has become a first-class municipality in the fifth district of Cavite. It hosts some 200 factories in eight economic zones and sports facilities, such as the San Lorenzo Leisure Park.

Loyola said the town was now striving to be called the "center of investments and sports in Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon)."

Despite the commercialization, Loyola vows to retain its agricultural skin, she said. Of Carmona's land area of 3,892 hectares, at least 29 percent remains agricultural.

Excelroof, Cossack try to keep PBL lead

EXCELROOF AND COSSACK BUSTING TO firm up their hold of the lead when they tackle separate rivals today in the 2012 PBL PG Fleet Feeds Placenta Cup at the Ynares Sports Arena in Pasig.

Fresh from a stunning 95-90 overtime rout spurt over heavily favored sister team Cobra Energy Drink, the Cossack Blue Spikers seek a fourth victory against the winless Air-FDA Cebuanas at 4 p.m.

Excelroof meets the Cobra ironmen earlier at 2 p.m. in a match that Zhen coach Ato Agustin said will prove to be very much instrumental for playoff go to the tournament.

"This is our toughest test yet," said Agustin, who steered the Sun Seibuan lineup to the NCAA title last year.

"The game against Cobra will be our gauge if we'll be a contender in this tournament."

STANDINGS	W	L
Excelroof	3	0
Cossack	3	0
Zhen	2	1
Cobra	1	2
Pure C	1	2
Air-FDA	0	3
TODAY'S GAMES		
(Ynares Sports Arena, Pasig)		
2 p.m.—Excelroof vs Cobra Energy		
4 p.m.—Cossack Blue vs Air-FDA		

The Zhen ironmen of the Jolibelle Transformers, 40-30, behind solid performances from Jerdee Aquino and rookie Jan Sangalang.

Agustin expects the duo to play better against Cobra, a squad loaded with talent.

Providing an interesting match-up are Aquino and Lee, two of the most explosive players in the amateur ranks today.

Lee has averaged 24 points in Cobra's first three games, while Aquino, the NCAA Finals Most Valuable Player, rammed 15 points.

The Spiritsare expected to lean on reinforcement Jessie Martinez, who posted 26 points in the victory over the Ironmen Saturday.

Martinez was sidelined in the second half of 2009 because of an ACL injury. The Spirits have a solid crew that also includes veterans Dave Seguinlol, Jovel Cadenas and former San Beda standout JP Taguibao. *Cedel P. Tupas*

CYCLISTS negotiate a curve in the Subic-to-Tarlac stage ruled by Teresa Martinez of Smart. TOTO LOZANO

Martinez takes fifth stage

Mumford new overall leader

By Jun Nisnisan

SAN JOSE, TARLAC—TOMAS MARTINEZ of Smart exploited his knowledge of the terrain to maintain his supremacy in the fifth stage of the 2010 Liquefied Petroleum Gas Marketers Association (LPGMA) Tour of Luzon at the Tarlac Monastery here.

Martinez, who grew up in nearby Barrio Barra town, solved 1 hour-in-three hours, six minutes and 11.64 seconds after pulling away in the hilly final 17 kilometers of the 143-km race from Angeles City.

Details from Nichols of BMG Cycling Team arrived 12.03 seconds later to seize second place with Ariel Quesada of Liquigas salvaging third, 30.16 seconds behind the lap winner.

Reid Mumford of Kelly Benefits Strategies placed fourth for the day, 1:02.750 behind Martinez, and wrested the yellow jersey from teammate Ryan Anderson, who struggled home in 28th place.

Mumford, the skipper of the US-based cycling squad, grabbed the overall lead with an accumulated clocking of nine hours, two minutes and 16.52 seconds.

David Arellano, another Kelly Benefits rider, finished to second overall, just 9.64 behind, followed by Nichols (19.27), Ramil Sheriff Sabbah of Liquigas (23:05.02) and Tagaytay's Alfredo Asuncion (23:58.52).

Completing the top 10 in the general classification standings were Tim Closhan of Amore/Vitoj (1:04.5.02), Jay Robvelino (1:12.11), Anderson (1:30.11), James Perry of BMC (1:01.31) and Martinez (1:08.49).

Closhan and teammate Cris Joven came home together in fifth place, 7:55.27 behind Martinez. Perry, who won yesterday's overall before yesterday's lap, clocked in 29th for the day.

"I've been training in these hills for a long time," said Martinez, a member of the national team, to Filipino. "Most of the riders don't go there. It's difficult but I've gotten used to it."

Martinez left the lead pack at the start of the 17-km climb with Nichols, Quesada, Sheriff Sabbah and Joven failing to catch up.

"The route took us by surprise. We didn't expect it to be this difficult," said Quesada, the 2003 Tour champion, in Filipino.

Chief commissioner Renato Del Mundo said the closing climb compares well with the Baguio ascent, which is the toughest route the cyclists used to close in the past.

Tagaytay's Ismael Asis clocked in seventh as what remained next to be a decisive stage of the nine-day race sponsored by LPGMA, prime is al estate developer Gen-Estero Bearer, Smart, Shakeagion, Alfido, Energizer and Liquigas.

Asis's teammate, Alfredo Asuncion, Governor Bataan's Renato Gavidonia, Bacnotan, Tolentino, stationer Virgil's Rental Olalia, Wilson, Cosme Hong of Kelly Benefits and CSB-Cobasi's Thomas Ashley Inegral into the top 15 by finishing prominently for the day.

Stage 6 will be another point-to-point race with almost the same level of difficulty from Subic to the highlands of Mawing, Bataan (100 km).

Romero not giving up on PBA dream

ROMERO

SHEIK ROMERO, THE BASKETBALL LIVing port magician, hasn't given up on his dream of entering a team in the Philippine Basketball Association.

"I'm still dreaming of having my own team in the PBA," Romero said recently. "And I hope to achieve it while I'm still young."

Romero had a two-and-a-half-month stint as head of basketball operations and alternate governor of 1Bk team Burger King (now AG21) last season, before giving up his post because his "group did not come to terms with Burger King."

Romero's latest conquest came in the middle season of the Asian Basketball League, where the Philippine Barkers, a team he oversees with business tycoon Tonyboy Cojuangco, bagged the crown by beating five of the best club teams in the region.

Reinforced by American Gabe Freeman and Jason Dixon, the Barkers topped the elimination round and swept Indonesian club Satria Muda Britama in the best-of-five finals.

The victory assured the Barkers of a slot in the Fiba Asia Champions Cup.

The title is the ABL also packed up Romero's collection to 10 in just four years.

"Honestly, I did not expect to win 10 championships since all I want is to give my rivals a fierce competition," said Romero, who also coached Dick Bennett for his victories.

"I learned a lot from my boss, as it was our mutual understanding that we pick players with never any die attitude which is also our team motto," said Antolin.

The 38-year-old Romero made his presence felt in the PBL where his franchise, Barkers Centro, won seven straight championships. *Cedel P. Tupas*

You know of bigger Pinoy boxers?

THE HUNT IS ON FOR CANDIDATE boxers in the heavier weights... notice is heavy—who could later fight for the Philippines in the London Olympics.

There was the expected loss after 6-foot-7 Alex Ghanto dropped by the heavier Boxing Association of the Philippines gym at Rizal Memorial last week.

Ghanto, who claimed he had bested during his reign, did not make any unexpected concessions about trying out for the BP boxing team, but the shop said it was leaving the door open for the barely-untested eager.

Of course, the host he could aim for is not same to that year's Asian Games.

Ghanto turned 24 earlier in the week, meaning he will be overage by the time the London Games open in 2012.

* * *

Bad Duty'ne not losing hope.

Before leaving for Tehran last Tuesday, Sbop executive director Ed Picson told their camp and top contributing tycoons he was PE-bounds, rugby veterans, who had more actions for BP in recent international assets.

"They could qualify for middleweight to heavyweight slots, and their vocals heard they had had some stints at related-martial arts," Picson told the boxmen.

Picson said the first thing he would do upon his return is link up with the two seasoned PE-boxers and have them tell up for initial orientation by his coaching staff.

Picson said he's also controlling an invitation to other tallet and bigger Filipino boxing aspirants to try and be part of the national boxing pool.

* * *

Anyway, Picson left for Iran accompanied by what could happen in 90-day Azkals Games. Ghanto described as a Golden Glover champion from the Midwest, who was strongly recommended by losing expat Hernan Rivera to the Abay.

Communication between Picson and Rivera had been temporarily disrupted.

But yesterday, the unpredictable Mr. Rivera resurfaced through an e-mail to your reporter here.

"OK, it's green and go. Julian will be going to the Philippines to hopefully be part of the national contingent to this year's Asiad," Rivera promised.

BARE EYE

Bryan Trinidad

* * *

There's no hurry anymore, because Julian, now 16 and could fight in the earlier and light middle divisions, can no longer qualify in this year's World Youth Olympics in Singapore.

Julian Chua cannot also be expected to immediately push up for Manila.

He has been scheduled to train at Wild Card, under Freddie Roach, for two and a half months starting June 1. **After he graduates from high school in the USA.**

Picson what we know, Hamosaying Hernan Gay he was christened by Marvelous Michael Hawkey) did not have to insist some in order to have his passage enrolled at Wildcard.

Now, although Julian's punches were visibly above average, Hernan may have to inform Freddie Roach they've to work harder on the kid's defense.

His fight tapes showed Julian was still incapable of weaving out of trouble competently.

He must be taught to bank pedal and punch at the same time.

* * *

Or he could also be trained to jab and weave his way out of trouble.

Julian really gets excited and disoriented once pushed to a corner.

Hernie is right. They may have to borrow some pointers from Lennie Espinosa, one of two guys Rivera had secured into world veterans, to give Julian pointers on proper footing.

As for Ormeta, who believes he still has at least three good basketball years in him, he left this parting statement:

"Even NBA players take coaching to improve their wonderfulness. After what I've seen here today, I think I'd like to hang around with these guys and train with them. This is not a yes or a no as to the idea of joining the team although I'd love to fight for the country. I'm saying I'd like to train with them."

PSC names 4 additions to elite pool

By Marc Anthony Reyes

PHILIPPINE SPORTS COMMISSION CHAIR Harry Angping yesterday named four more athletes to the national elite pool, boosting the list of potential gold medalists to 13 in the Asian Games set in Guangzhou in November.

Angping said two-time Olympians Mary Antoinette Rivero and Teresitas Sy, bodybuilder Jenny Garan multiple gold winners, have been elevated to the coach group along with GMa Jessy Acosmin and Dennis Garcia.

The elite members will get a monthly allowance of P50,000 and international exposures every three months.

"With the new things are going, I think we are on track for 18 golds," said Angping, who expects taekwondo, boxing, bowling, dancesport and billiards to deliver.

The country's best Asian Games performance came in the host edition held here in 1954 with 14 gold medals.

The PSC also approved the inclusion in the training pool of SEA Games champion taekwondo jins Alexandre Briones and John Paul Lizardo and Olin Eugene Torre and Mark Barajas.

The members of the World and Sea Games champion karatekas were Jennifer Morilla, Janine Lagmana and Raul Soto Ortega—were also given the maximum P50,000 allowance although they are not considered elite pool members because their event is not in the Guangzhou schedule.

Also given the green light to join the national pool are swimmers Hyrie Arabejo, Charles Walden, Kristofer Uy-yui, Boxster Ring Lawson, who will get P15,000 a month each, and Erika Ferrer and Jasmine Al-Khalili, who will each receive P8,000 a month.

SPORTSWATCH

FOR A CAUSE Coca-Cola assistant coach and PE International Philippines PR director Alex Compton (back row, 3rd from right) and other PBA personalities join the inauguration of a basketball court in Smoky Mountain along with representatives of Mighty Sports and Young Focus International

BP TOP CHOICE Ar Santa Ana Park

Lagman, Sato log kart upsets

ARCHIE LORENZO LAGMAN AND Japanese Shuhei Sato fashioned out upsets recently in the BP1 class of 2010 Rapido Sports RPM25 Cup Series second leg at the Clark International Speedway.

Their victories came in Race 1 winner Jem Calderon got tangled in a series of mishaps and while Indonesian Yanto Senna Irawan of Red and White Racing shipped the rest of the event sanctioned by the Automobile Association Philippines.

Lagman, the pride of Angeles City, dictated the tempo throughout as he gained distance lap after lap for the unchallenged win, finishing the nine-lap race in eight minutes and 28.0000 seconds, 4.675 seconds ahead of Sato, who clocked in second.

France Reyes of Air Racing took third place while Pete C PCE Tingle Gear's Pete AR Asha and Rodolfo Rivera wound up fourth and fifth.

Sato revealed his true form in Race 4 as he held off Lagman, who later dropped to ninth after a track incident.

Celtics greet Pierce return with victory

PIERCE

DETROIT—THE BOSTON CELTICS snapped a two-game losing streak with a 103-100 victory over the Detroit Pistons on Monday.

Ray Allen led a strong team effort with 18 points while Brian Scalabrine added 15 and 11 assists for the Celtics, who welcomed back All-Star forward Paul Pierce after he missed the three previous games with a thumb injury.

"It's a long season and you definitely have your ups and downs," Allen told reporters. "When you hit a skid, you've just got to stick together and weather the storm.

"When everybody's hands and hearts are in the right place, it's maybe easier said than done, but we figured out a way."

The game had been tied at 79-79 in the fourth before Boston went on a 10-2 run that gave them the advantage they held until the end.

The loss was Detroit's fourth in a row.

Pierce had nine points, but attempted just seven shots, including one three-pointer.

"He's really struggled out there but that's fine," said Pistons coach Lee Brown. "The bottom line is we have to use those games to get that going. He'll be better."

STANDINGS BOXES And T.O. Boston 98, Toronto 92, Sup 92

Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres
Assistant Editor Francis T.J. Ochoa

SPORTS

JAMES' Tip of Purefoods receives his trophy from PBA commissioner Rennala "Sonny" Barrios before the start of Game 5.

KING JAMES' NIGHT

Giants complete sweep

By Marcus R. Castillo

TALK ABOUT A COMPLETE NIGHT AND you'll end up talking about James Yap.

On a night when he scooped up two individual accolades, Yap helped Purefoods complete a dream ride in the EPC-PBA Philippine Cup title series by keying an 86-76 victory by a sweep of Alaska before close to 17,000 screaming souls at the Araneta Coliseum.

Hours after winning his first Player of the Conference award, Yap drained the shots that deflated the Aces in the fourth period as the Tender Juicy Giants poured past the fourth 4-0 sweep in the PBA—third in a championship series, and first in an all-Filipino finals.

"Of course I am happy," Yap said as fans in Filipinos, a few minutes before Game 4's tipoff. "But more than anything, I would like the team to win the championship, so that everyone would be happy."

A couple of hours after that statement and after 18 big points that led all Purefoods shooters, Yap got what he wanted.

"We achieved our goal," added Yap, who was later named the Honda Fin PBA Press Corps Finals MVP."I am doubly happy now because we and my teammates have the biggest reason to celebrate."

Purefoods actually won its last seven games in the playoffs en route to its fifth all-Filipino crown en tie the defunct Crispa Redmanizers for the most overall by any franchise.

Roger Yap was also big, finishing with 16 points and six assists, with a followup of his own runs in the final 2:28 giving the Tender Juicy Giants an 83-75 lead.

The most entertained daughter of veteran hurler Rey Semira point with Willie Miller having a sexy, but Jeremy Yap hits a three-pointer with the shootout winding down which made it 84-75 with 1:43 remaining.

"Chapter closed. Destination reached. Mission accomplished. Now we can celebrate," Purefoods coach Jhun Gregorio, who won his second MVC title, told reporters.

Meanwhile, 40/21 and Talk 'N Text outfit is the player swap Tuesday. The Tropang took back in their fold center Kerry de Ocampo and shooting guard Ren Ren Ritualo in exchange for JB Quilinchan, Mark Bo and Aaron Aban.

Also, the league upgraded assistant and floor on issues settling out of games from P500,000 in P10 million, according to a release sent by the PBA to media offices.

The scores:

PUREFOODS 86—Yap 18, Ilo 16, Yap R. 16, Espinosa 11, Ulanday 10, Wright 8, Devon 3, Reavis 3, Cruz 2, Asbaht 0, Salvador 0, Abarrel 0.

ALASKA 76—Wood 19, Miller 17, Semira 14, Aquino 8, Cortes 5, Melton 4, Sweeney 4, Cruz-Cruz 3, Ferrer 2, Cuntay 1, Demeter 0.

Quarters: 21-16, 41-40, 63-59, 86-76.

YOU ASK
Question: Who was the slam dunk champion in 2009?

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Pacquiao beating up sparmates, says security

By Ray Lucas

HOLLYWOOD—MANNY PACQUIAO IS reaching peak form for his March 13 defense of the World Boxing Organization welterweight crown against Ghanaian Joshua Clottey.

The one who Canadian Rob Brown confidently told Filipino sportswriters, who caught up with him at Sin's Thai restaurant near the PBO Cardgym.

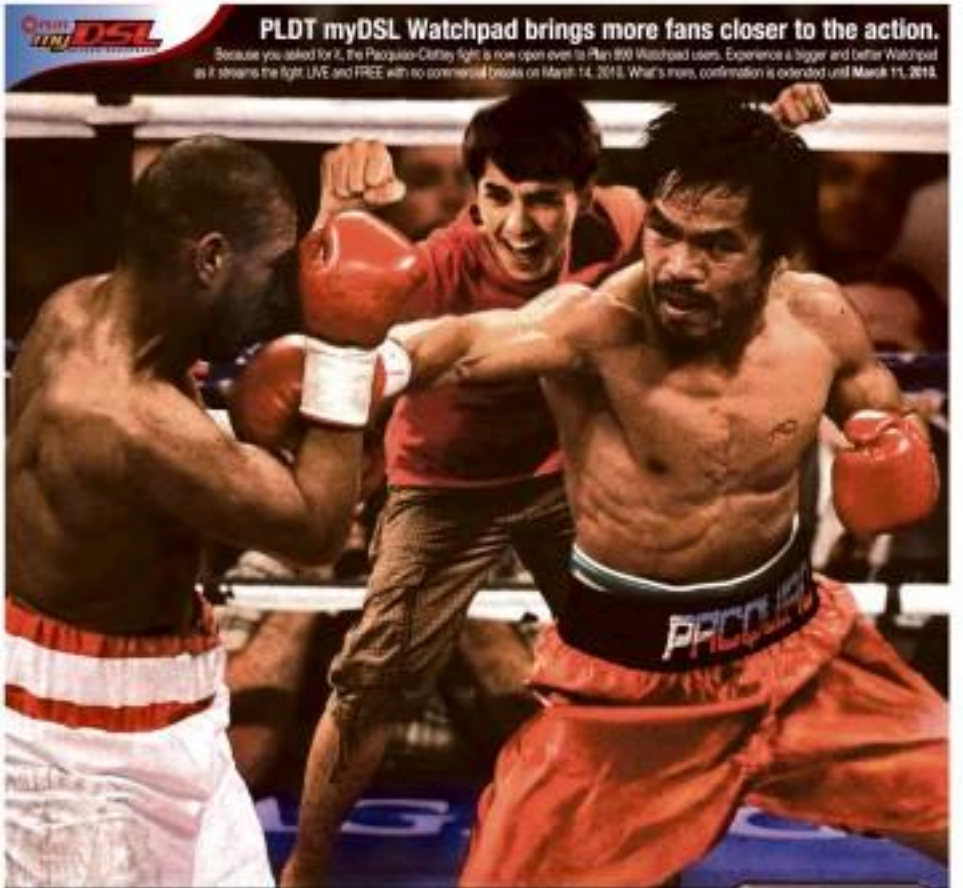
Brown, Pacquiao's chief security, added that the pound-for-pound king again toyed with his sparmates in a 10-round afternoon session held behind closed doors under the watchful eyes of master trainer Freddie Roach.

"The more guys they put on him, the more guys he beat up," said Brown, citing Pacquiao's sparring Sunday with Raymond Belmond and Dmitri Bodrin and light welterweight prospect Jason Sosa tough of Dublin, Ireland.

According to Brown, the 19-year-old Batangueño, who completed a 168-lefty, 12-loss record in a stellar amateur career highlighted by a silver-medal effort in last year's 48th World Youth Championships, however two coverages and "came to a little tie better."

The observation of Brown jibed with comments from boxing pundits who've seen Pacquiao honing up his skills for the March 13 duel with Clottey at the Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, Texas.

PLDT myDSL Watchpad brings more fans closer to the action.
Because you asked for it, the Pacquiao-Clottey fight is now open even to Plan 999 Watchpad users. Experience a bigger and better Watchpad as it streams the fight LIVE and FREE with no commercial breaks on March 14, 2010. What's more, confirmation is extended until March 11, 2010.



The Pacquiao-Clottey fight is now open to Plan 999 subscribers who registered to Watchpad on or before March 1, 2010.
The fight is also open to all residential subscribers of Plans 1299 and up. Log on to www.pldtwatchpad.com.
Not yet a Watchpad user? Register first to Watchpad then confirm your availment. For existing Watchpad users, only confirmation is required. A confirmation letter will be sent within 48 hours.
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DID YOU KNOW

PROPERTY damage due to fires fell from P3.2 billion in 2006 to P2.26 billion in 2009.
Cpt. Leandro Ingcar Rosacia

10 hurt in Antipolo City as truck hits 13 vehicles

A 10-WHEELER truck plows into 13 vehicles on Sumulong Highway, Antipolo City yesterday, finally coming to a rest beside an Isuzu van but not before 10 people were injured. ALVIN GOMEZ

By DJ Yap

TEN PERSONS, INCLUDING two young girls, were hurt after a wayward 10-wheeler truck rammed into several vehicles over a kilometer-long stretch of Sumulong Highway in Antipolo City yesterday morning.

The accident occurred at 8:30 a.m. on a downhill portion of the highway near Francisville Subdivision, Barangay Mambugan, investigators said.

Rafael Villaluna, the driver of the truck with plate number 699 105, claimed he lost control of the vehicle after the brakes failed. It hit 13 vehicles, including a passenger jeepney, PO2 Robert Ganga said.

"The driver was unable to control the truck so it plowed into a parked jeepney, then it hit a Toyota Vios, then a Kia, and then an aluminum van and so on. It happened over a kilometer-long stretch of road," Ganga said.

Some of the victims were walking or standing on the sidewalk when they were hit, while the others were in the driver's seat or at the back of the jeepney, the investigator said.

They were taken to Amang Rodriguez Medical Center in Marikina City for treatment, and all were in stable condition, Ganga said. He said the youngest among the victims were a 7-year-old and a 9-year-old girl while the oldest was 68.

'Hotel sale the deal of the century'

By Tina G. Santos

A MANILA COUNCILOR YESTERDAY defended the claim of a city official that the sale of Century Park Hotel was valid and legal.

"That's a lie," said Councilor Maria Lourdes Isip-Garcia, referring to the statements made by lawyer Rolando Cuevas Jr., secretary to Mayor Alfredo Lim, that the sale of the hotel was abovetboard and in compliance with all the necessary procedures.

The hotel was sold for P1 billion to Marianne Hotels and Resort Corp. which is owned by business tycoon Lucio Tan.

Estrellita cited the secrecy for the sale was used for public services, including the new 30-story Sta. Ana hospital.

Garcia, however, claimed that the city council did not approve the use of the P1 billion proceeds from the sale for the construction of the hospital.

According to her, the new hospital and the lot where it is situated were donated by the Lucio Tan Foundation.

Garcia, who is running for vice mayor with Lim's political rival, former Environment Secretary Lito Atienza, also said that the city council had approved a supplemental ordinance setting aside millions of pesos for the purchase of medical equipment and the new hospital's operating expenses.

"It's the deal of the century. It's the biggest corruption by far in the city of Manila. By 2011, we would have owned the Century Park Building because its lease contract would have expired by then," she said.

Garcia added that the resolution which approved the sale of the hotel indicated a much smaller lot area compared to the actual size of the property.

'Plain and simple plunder'

"It means we not only lost money because it was sold at a lower price per square meter, we also lost money ... because there are at least 30,000 square meters unaccounted for—plain and simple plunder. If it's not plunder, then it's extremely outrageous," she said.

Meanwhile, Atienza, who is running for mayor, vowed to recover the 4.3 hectare city property on which the hotel is built should he regain the city's top post.

Atienza insisted that the property leased by the city government could easily fetch P4.3 billion given its prime location.

"We are fully committed to recover what is considered one of the 'crown jewels' of Manila," he said.

Earlier this week, a lawyer filed graft charges with the Office of the Ombudsman against Lim and several other city officials over the sale of the hotel.

In a 28-page complaint, Reynaldo L. Bagaoisan said the sale should be nullified and the respondents penalized because the sale was "manifestly and grossly disadvantageous to the City of Manila."

According to him, the hotel could have been sold for P3 billion.

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DOJ–not LGUs–to go after informal settlers

By Nitz Cahiya

THE METROPOLITAN MANILA Development Authority-led agency on informal settlers has assigned the Department of Justice, instead of local government units (LGUs), as its prosecutorial arm against illegal and professional squatters.

The Metro Manila Inter-Agency Committee on Informal Settlers (MMIAC) approved on Feb. 26 what is called Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) that would govern the implementation of The Comprehensive Shelter Program (CSP) in the National Capital Region, MMDA Chair Oscar Inumerez said in a statement yesterday.

The IRR, Inumerez said, is tailored by the MMDA, the National Housing Authority and the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council.

Resettlement programs

Created through Executive Order 893, the MMDC was created to carry out housing and resettlement programs for homeless citizens under the CSP.

Instead of the local government units, however, said the DOJ would pursue the filing of charges against professional squatters or squatting syndicates, individuals and groups who have sufficient income for housing but still occupy lands without the consent of the owners.

Vote-rich colonies

The MMDA chair added that some 1,026 have been lax in going after illegal squatters since local politicians rely on these vote-laden colonies of informal settlers come the elections.

"This way, we will be able to deal with squatters effectively and swiftly and move forward towards providing housing for qualified beneficiaries," Inumerez forewarns.

The number of informal settlers in 2009 has ballooned to 537,175 families, based on a list submitted by 13 out of 17 LGUs in Metro Manila.

Of the this number, 292,123 families have resided on government-owned lands, while 171,526 families live in private-owned lands, 81,526 families are located in danger areas, 76,099, in areas for priority development and 11,000 families reside in area affected by government priority projects.

The number can still exceed the 2007 figure of 560,600 informal settlers once the data from Pateros starts and the cities of Muntinlupa, Marikina and Parañaque is updated.

MAN'S BEST FRIEND Henry Bulay, who says he has been training dogs for 24 years, goes around a subdivision in Las Piñas with his "assistants" who are trained to pull carts and carry a basket in their mouth. AP

PROPER WASTE DISPOSAL Maintenance workers at the Quezon City Hall of Justice not only take out the trash, they also practice segregation, one of the reasons the agency has been cited for its environment-friendly waste disposal program by the city government.

2 suspects in transport group official's slay nabbed

By Nitz C. Cervizi

TWO BROTHERS, POSSE MEMbers in the killing of an official of a transport association in Quezon City were arrested on Tuesday afternoon hours after the incident.

Supt. Lito Banaag, Quezon City Police District Criminal and Investigation Unit head, identified the suspects as Jano Sarmiento, 34, and Adalberto Barrigadal, 23. Both are residents of Barangay Holy Spirit.

Murder charges will be filed against the two suspects, said Banaag.

Chief Insp. Benjamin Ilustrisimo, QCPD homicide chief, said policemen from QCPD Station 3 arrested the suspects around 1:30 p.m.

Witnesses

The police official said several witnesses identified the brothers as the ones involved in the shooting of Philfredo Ugalde, 47, who was recently elected board member of the Luzon Brickyards Drivers and Operators Association playing Luzon Avenue and nearby areas in Quezon City. The suspects, who are now detained at Camp Karingal, denied the charges.

Ilustrisimo said the victim was gunned down inside his vehicle at the tricycle terminal at the corner of Luzon and Commonwealth Avenue around 9:30 a.m.

Upon sustained a gunshot wound in the head and was declared dead on arrival at the East Avenue Medical Center.

The homicide chief said rivalry could be the motive behind the killing.

"We have reason to believe that rivalry within the tricycle organization could have led to the shooting," Ilustrisimo said.

Takeover

"The victim's group just took over the management of their organization after 20 years of being run by the other party," he added.

Ilustrisimo noted that based on an initial investigation, the victim was involved in a shooting incident with another driver belonging to a rival group within the organization last Saturday.

Why single out only one suspect?

POLICE ARE INVESTIGATING A public works contractor in the Bicol region for the death of "turning" whistle-blower Wilfredo "Boy" Mayor.

Mayor had expressed fears for his life when he and another whistle-blower, Sandra Gan, came to see our two days before he was ambushed.

Investigators suspect the public contractor, Eduardo Go, because he was mentioned by Gan as one of those who had a motive.

Mayor had denounced Go to the alleged rigging of bids for public works projects in Bicol.

In what way police should also investigate the people, including the three Aquino—presidential cousins Mike, son Pampanga Rep. Mikey Arroyo and brother-in-law Negros Occidental Rep. Jeci—already named vaguely in a pursuing payoff during a Senate probe years ago.

Those people also would have the motive for having Mayor killed because he denounced their representatives.

Why haven't the police indicted them as possible suspects?

Why are the senators above his enquiry to be asked?

* * *

I made an investigation of my own the other day on who would want Mayor killed.

I stumbled upon other possible suspects: Persons that Mayor owed gambling debts to.

Persons who'd I gathered, Mayor gambled and lost heavily at the casinos and incurred huge debts from several gambling financiers.

A source who asked not to be named said Mayor stopped his debts from these gambling financiers.

In fact, at the time of his death, Mayor had come from a small casino in Pasay City.

He was avoiding financiers who never looking for him to play in the big casinos where they were doing business.

The last person Mayor talked to in a restaurant **financier known only as 'Flora'** at the small Pasay casino, minutes before he was ambushed.

"Flora" might know following financiers who would meet Mayor killed.

* * *

Casino financing is a multi-billion-peso business.

The message from casino players amount to millions every day because of the handouts amount on losing.

Gambling addicts pawn their jewelry, cars and even to their homes or landholdings to casino financiers as collateral.

But some gamblers, like Mayor, don't have to put up collateral because of their financier reputation for paying on time.

Their names are their collateral.

But some of these gamblers default on their loans after a while like Mayor did, said my source.

And their nonpayment could be fatal because casino financiers operate like the Mafia.

* * *

Mark Anthony Nicanito was run over by a speeding truck on Bikday, Dec. 28.

A witness said the truck was an Isuzu elf with the plate numbers WOH 971 or WOH 976—he's not so sure which.

My staff at "Countdown with Ray Teller" checked with the Land Transportation Office and found that both numbers belonged to trucks.

But WOH 974 was the plate number of an Isuzu elf.

Police should look for the owner of the elf.

3 men charged with violating gun ban

By Nitz C. Cervizi and DJ Yap

NO EXCEPTIONS.

Two agents of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) and a soldier who said he was a security aide of Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes were apprehended on Tuesday night for violating the gun ban.

Supt. Edgardo Bautista, head of the Quezon City Police District (QCPD) Station 11, said Oliver de la Rosa, 35, and Sammy Concepcion, 27, were arrested at a police checkpoint in Quezon City for violating the election gun ban and for concealing the license plate of their vehicle by covering it with a leaf.

Both men said they were PDEA agents and carried out 47 patrols.

"Mentira ang mga 'yan. Hindi sila exempted basta ba lang sa election period," Bautista said.

He added that the agents claimed they had just come from an undercover operation.

The two agents, along with a suspected drug pusher they had arrested, were later turned over to PDEA after they were charged with violating the gun ban and tampering with a car's license plate at the Quezon City Prosecutor's Office.

Although they identified themselves as PDEA agents, the policemen became suspicious because they refused to have their vehicle inspected. Under the law, the police cannot stand (on getting inside) the vehicle, but if they have reason to believe that a crime had been committed or been being committed, they can be stopped (the vehicle)," Bautista said.

He added that the PDEA had established that both men were their agents.

In Pasig City, an Army soldier who allegedly introduced himself as Reyes' security aide was held at a police checkpoint for carrying a firearm without the proper active.

T/Sgt. Albert Bandoria was apprehended by police officers at a checkpoint in Barangay San Joaquin at about 10:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Senior Supt. Jesus Cardona, Pasig police chief, said.

"[The] subject was wearing improper uniform: Black fatigue pants, boots, a T-shirt and black civilian jacket with a .45-cal. gun in his holster in violation of Commission on Elections Resolution 8714," which violates the nationwide gun ban, the official said.

Cardona, however, could not confirm if Bandoria was indeed part of Reyes' security detail, saying they had not verified the information. "There were reports that he was a former security guard but we haven't confirmed this," he said.

Bandoria's pistol was confiscated and Cardona said he would be charged with violating the Comelec gun ban.

From Jan. 10 to March 2, the Pasig police have confiscated seven firearms, a hand grenade and 20 deadly weapons, and arrested 29 individuals for violating the ban.

Cardona said they are beefing up checkpoints around the city on orders of Chief Supt. Benjardi Morales, the Eastern Police District director, and National Capital Region Police Office Director Rodolfo Bacalso.

METROBRIEFS

PGH official downplays resolution

A RESOLUTION expressing support for the reinstatement director of the Philippine General Hospital (PGH) does not reflect the sentiments of all faculty members of the University of the Philippines College of Medicine. This was Dr. Jonathan Chuanguingco's reaction to a resolution expressing support for Dr. Jose Gonzales, whom he replaced as PGH director. "Only 120 out of the total 800 faculty members signed the resolution. Half [only] 20 percent, I guess that doesn't represent the sentiments of the entire group," he told the reporter in an interview. "I don't need to defend myself. I have enough support from my colleagues." he added. "I can also have 120 more friends sign a resolution expressing support for me, but I won't do that. I don't need to do that." The resolution to have of Gonzales, a cardiologist who was appointed on Dec. 28 last year, was made following a meeting of the council of the UP medical school, composed of professors and faculty members. Gonzales' appointment was recalled after Leon discovered that the doctor-in-charge who had led the group was not a member of the UP medical school. Chuanguingco said the results of the first poll are invalid because it was not a secret election, which resulted in a unanimous vote for Gonzales; the 20-PGH deputy director for administration. Elmo G. Gaviola

12 hurt in pillbox blast

AT LEAST 12 people, mostly students, were injured after a pillbox exploded in Manila at around noon yesterday, Chief Supt. Nanette Castro, Manila Police District director-in-charge, said the victims, except for one, were students of the University of Santo Tomas and College of Perpetual Help. Investigation showed the explosion took place on Isnard Dulos Bunting Street, on Quezon City Street in Sampaloc. Witnesses told the police that the victims were eating outside the canteen when two men on a motorcycle hurled the homemade bomb at them. Police are eyeing a terrorist act as the possible motive behind the explosion. Elmo G. Gaviola

NO REPRIEVE Barangay's dust up to residents' protests, demolition workers tear down houses on Luzon Avenue, Barangay Old Balara, Quezon City, to make way for the C-5 Road extension project.

Damage from Chile quake placed at $30B

TALCAHUANO, CHILE—THE tsunami that hit this coastal city just 30 km fishing boats crashing into one another and demolished its port—striping and the $40 million in business that courses through the local economy from the natural seafaring and seafaring north.

Less than 100 kilometers away, Chile's economy took another beating as the mammoth quake downed bridges and opened up vast cracks on the nation's only north-south highway, paralyzing the export lifeline for the nation's resources and its natural resource industry.

And Chile's telecommunications system was still so badly out of whack on Tuesday—four days after the quake—that local and foreign investors who own vineyards that export the bottled-in-the-sense couldn't reach winery employees by phone or Internet to discuss the upcoming harvest.

"You have to get grapes from the vineyards to the winery, and I don't know the condition of the roads around the winery," said Mark Grimm, spokesperson for Caliterra's Antiguas Family Wines, owner of the Viña Calina winery in the devastated Talca region almost 100 km from the quake's epicenter.

Chile's horrendously destructive 8.8-magnitude quake doesn't have a price tag on it yet, although President Michelle Bachelet mentioned a $30-billion estimate when she met on Tuesday with United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who delivered 23 satellite phones as a down payment on disaster assistance.

HUGE marker Claudia Vergara runs the destruction of her piano during Saturday's 8.8-magnitude earthquake that wrought widespread havoc in Chile.

It also translates into higher emergency-relief costs for an industry already hurt by the declining value of the US dollar.

Chile's copper-mining vehicle supplies a third of the world's copper, wasn't badly affected because it lies north of Santiago.

Similarly, the large ships that ship Chile's rich wastes far out on sea-side out the tsunami and also deliver their cargoes to ports unaffected by the earthquake.

But an estimated 1,000 boats that sank closer to shore were destroyed, said Eduardo Oliva, a spokesperson for Chile's National Confederation of Small Fishermen. Some boats ended up kilometers inland.

The quake hit just as the four-month fishing season was starting for the 700 small-scale fishermen in Talcahuano, said Nelson Estrada, president of their union representing fishermen who now make the several with nothing to do. then jones scattered by Mark and that the tsunami left behind.

"The season has been killed," Estrada said from the wrecked port cooking of parrot fish.

The region where they ply the waters nets 4 percent of the world's annual catch of seafood, some 2 million metric tons, said Hector Bacigalupo, general manager of Chile's National Fishing Association.

At least 98 persons—including hake, mackerel and shellfish—goes to the US, Australia and Africa.

Many fishermen also lost their homes, as eerie sights of Louisiana's shrimpers who were devastated by Hurricane "Katrina" and haven't fully recovered five years later.

Pavez Nelson fishermen whose boats survived intact may find it hard to work because it will take months or more to repair onboard, ing gears and engines equipment that homes aside from fish-processing plants. AP

Greece plans new spending cuts

ATHENS—GREECE PLANS NEW spending cuts worth an expected $6.2 billion, reducing bonuses for its civil servants and increasing up the sales tax to 21 percent in a try to lift the country out of a severe financial crisis, officials said on Wednesday.

Prime Minister George Papandreou said the country was in a "state of war" and was fighting for its national survival.

Government officials, speaking on condition of anonymity because it was ahead of the official spending cuts announcement, said the measures would include cuts in civil servant's annual pay through reducing three Easters, Christmas and vacation bonuses by 30 percent each, and an increase in sales tax to 21 percent from the current 19 percent.

The new austerity package comes after the European Union officials bluntly told Athens to make deeper spending cuts. Ratings agencies have also warned of more damaging downgrades if Greece is unable or acts in its debt.

Greeks have their annual salaries split into 14 monthly installments, with the last two considered holiday bonuses. Unions have said abolishing the 14th salary would be tantamount to a "declaration of war."

In a dramatic speech to his socialist party deputies on Tuesday night, Papandreou said all Greeks would have to accept painful sacrifices, as he warned of "catastrophic" consequences unless the country could borrow on international markets at lower lending rates.

Unions strongly condemned the cuts.

"It is a very difficult day for us ... These cuts will take us to the brink," said Stamatis Vretzakis, the head of the influential civil servants' association. "Brussels is demanding cuts and the government is doing nothing to stop them. To make poor pensioners pay for this crisis is a disgrace." AP

HILTON

Hilton too hot for Brazil

RIO DE JANEIRO—TYA COS friend: Paris Hilton is too hot for Brazil.

A sultry beer ad featuring the socialite has been pulled after consumer complaints and a watchdog agency's investigation.

The television and Internet ad featured Hilton in a short black dress caressing and rubbing a can of Devassa beer as, herself, all in the twilight of the hotheirs' watching through her window.

Renata Athanasiadi said in a statement on Tuesday it would defend the commercial, but is pulling it out in the meantime.

An ad watchdog group, Conar, asked last week that the ad be removed, stating that regulations don't permit a beer commercial to court women or overtly sensual objects. Brandi's lieutenant for Women's Affairs also said it had received complaints about the ad.

Many Brazilian beer ads feature women in bikinis—but in the context of a beach setting, where such clothing is expected.

"The problem with the ad isn't a lack of clothing, but its sensual nature," said Iolanda Cerezo, a Conar spokesperson. AP

WORLDBRIEFS

Uganda slides kill 86

KAMPALA—Landslides swamped three villages in Uganda, killing at least 86 people and leaving hundreds missing after the storm of mud swept through a church and mosque, Uganda's minister of state for disaster preparedness said that 60 residents who had taken refuge in a hospital were among the dead or missing. "All of a sudden the church collapsed. Mud covered the whole place. Five people seated next to me died. I only survived because my head was above the mud," James Kawere, 29, said from a hospital in Bududa, where he was receiving treat a broken leg and arm. AP

38 dead in suicide blasts

BAGHDAD—A string of three deadly suicide bombings killed at least 38 people in the former insurgent stronghold of Baquba on Wednesday, including a blast from a suicide bomber who rode in an ambulance with the wounded before detonating himself up at a hospital. The bombings—Iraq's deadliest in weeks—come as Iraq is preparing for the March 7 elections that will decide who will oversee the country as United States forces go home and help determine whether Iraq can overcome the deep sectarian tensions that have divided the nation since the 2003 US-led invasion. AP

Beijing on alert

BEIJING—Wash-clad SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) teams patrolled downtown Beijing on Wednesday and an AK-47 glass was ordered to cancel a seminar as part of China's security clampdown ahead of this week's opening of the national legislature's annual session. Officers on motorcycles and in armored vans circled Tiananmen Square in the heart of the capital, adjacent to the Great Hall of the People where members of the legislature's advisory body begin meeting on Wednesday. The actual legislature, a largely ceremonial body known as the National People's Congress, begins its nearly two-week session on Friday. AP

14 rebels convicted

DILI—A court in East Timor on Wednesday convicted and sentenced 14 rebels to up to 16 years in prison over the attempted assassinations of the fledgling democracy's president and prime minister. Another four defendants were acquitted following a seven-month trial on charges of conspiracy and attempted murder that ended last month. President José Ramos-Horta narrowly died of gunshot wounds received in an attack in his Dili compound on Feb. 11, 2008, and Prime Minister Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao narrowly escaped ambushes from an ambush of his motorcade later that day. AP

Sentenced to be caned

KUALA LUMPUR—A Muslim Malaysian woman sentenced to be caned for drinking beer was granted a royal audience on Wednesday but her fate remains unclear six months after the punishment was suspended. Kartika Sari Dewi Shukarno, 32, was ordered to receive six strokes of the cane by a religious court last year, in a case that has fueled a debate over rising "Islamization" of multiethnic Malaysia. State media has reported that Kartika's sentence, which would not hold pending a review, would only be carried out after she met with the royal rulers of Pahang state where she was caught drinking at a hotel bar. AP

Death recommended

SAN'A ABA—A Southern California jury on Tuesday recommended the death penalty for a North Carolina woman convicted of murdering a Washington state businessman and her 13-year-old daughter. The same Orange County panel convicted Tonya Nelson of North Carolina, last month of masterminding the murders of Konyamadee Ha "Jade" Smith and Austin Ho in 2005. Nelson hired Smith to get her ex-lover back. But when the southeastern told her to accept nasty she became upset and plotted to drive across the country to kill her. Prosecutors said Smith and her daughter were stabbed as many as 10 times and their faces and hands were covered in white paint, which may have been an attempt to cover up evidence. AP

HK 'millionaire murder'

HONG KONG—Prosecutors on Wednesday rested a new murder indictment against Nancy Kissel, an American who successfully appealed an earlier conviction on charges of drugging and then beating her husband to death in a luxury apartment complex. Hong Kong's Department of Justice subpoenaed the fresh murder charges against Kissel to the territory's High Court, which scheduled a 60-day trial starting Nov. 1. Her attorneys had hoped the charges would be reduced to manslaughter. AP

Sex bracelets banned

RIO DE JANEIRO—A Brazilian mayor has banned so-called "sex bracelets" worn by children to flaunt their sexual preferences from all public schools, saying they lead to inappropriate discussions. Inauguration Mayor Hubert Cardoz de Souza said on his official website that the bracelets were now banned in all local public schools and teachers would be required to give students sex education and explain to parents what the wristbands are called. AP

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We're looking for true stories from

World War II

The Philippine Veterans Bank and the Philippine Daily Inquirer are pleased to announce the 2010 WWII True Stories Contest

The competition aims to recover stories about the personal experiences of the men and women who served during the Second World War, as well as other individuals who lived through the same conflict, through their own recounting. This contest is intended to show that students have interviewed, researched, read about and understood the subject and formed their own narratives.

The contest is open to all Filipino students up to 18 years of age attending public or private high schools in the Philippines. To compete, a high school student must:

a. Personally interview a WWII veteran or any person alive during WWII about his/her experiences during war era;

b. Write a narrative in English that tells in a maximum of 1,000 words the interviewee's story, including important details and quotes from the interview.

Each narrative entry should be an original, unpublished, logical, cohesive and fluently developed narrative written by one student. It should be accompanied by an entry form found in Inquirer's Learning section or in Inquirer's Libre once a week until March 2010. The coupon must be duly accomplished and glued on a sheet of paper that serves as cover page.

Previously submitted stories shall not qualify as entries.

The first place winner will receive a laptop computer and a printer plus a PVB saving account of P10,000. The second place winner will receive a desktop computer plus a PVB savings account of P7,000. The third place winner will receive a digital camera plus a PVB savings account of P5,000.

Entries may be submitted to any Philippine Veterans Bank branch nationwide by 4 p.m. of March 16, 2010. Winners will be announced on April 5 and awarded April 10, 2010.

2010 WWII True Stories Contest

Official Entry Form INQUIRER LIBRE

Name: _____

Address: _____

Mobile: _____ Telephone: _____

School: _____

Address: _____

Year: _____ Teacher's Name: _____

For complete contest mechanics, log on to www.veteransbank.com.ph or www.inquirer.com.ph

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Edited by Lawrence B. Greco

The WORLD

Guatemala cop chief, drug czar arrested

GUATEMALA CITY—AUTHORITIES arrested Guatemala's antidrug czar and national police chief on Thursday in a case involving stolen cocaine and slain policemen, acting just two days before United States Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton arrives to discuss the drug war.

The detentions were the latest embarrassment for Guatemala's embattled antidrug campaign and come amid US complaints that corruption is impeding the battle to stop the flow of narcotics north through Central America.

Attorney General Amilcar Velasquez said Maynor Police Chief Baltazar Gomez, antidrug czar Nelly Botella and police officer Fernando Cuellar were detained after investigations by Guatemalan authorities and the United Nations-sponsored International Commission Against Impunity.

The commission's head, Carlos Castresana, said the three officials arrested on Thursday, the first agents detained in history and the five officers killed in a gun battle with drug traffickers last year were part of a police group that stole drugs from organized crime.

Members of the police group had stolen 760 kilograms of cocaine from a drug raid. Before's rearrestance in the town of Ixcanchan and retrieved the 760 kg more and an arsenal of weapons when they were ambushed by gangsters, Castresana said.

Five officers died in the April gun battle that resulted in the police seizing automatic weapons and about 500 rocket-launched grenades.

"We can't say whether it was the first or last time they had stolen drugs," Castresana said.

He said authorities became suspicious of the slain officers after learning that successes against had blocked federal prosecutors from reaching the crime scene and notching the national police didn't open an investigation into the officers' deaths.

In a brief meeting with reporters at a detention center, Gomez didn't address the accusation that he was involved with a police group that was stealing drugs. But he denied he tried to cover up the involvement of the five dead officers.

Botella called the accusations a vendetta against him, but she also didn't specifically address Castresana's outline of the alleged crimes. "I have enemies and I was on their way," Botella told Channel 7 television.

At the time of the gun battle, police said it involved members of the Zetas, a group of hit men and drug traffickers linked to Mexico's powerful Gulf cartel. The Zetas have extended their operations into Guatemala in recent years after coming under pressure from Mexican President Felipe Calderon's drug war.

Clinton is scheduled to discuss Guatemala's drug war when she meets with President Alvaro Colom on Friday, winding up her visit through Latin America this week.

Officials say Guatemala has become a transshipment point for cocaine heading north from Colombia, with Mexico's powerful drug cartels dispatching their men into the impoverished Central American country.

Guatemala has witnessed the arrests of a string of top law enforcement officials as sporadic with overseeing the fight against both local gangs and foreign cartels.

Botella is the second drug czar to be detained and Gomez, who previously served as drug czar, is the second national police chief to be jailed for alleged drug ties in recent years.

In September last year, National Police Chief Porfirio Perez was suspended and later detained for allegedly stealing $300,000 from smugglers. He is awaiting trial. AP

Globe-Ayala Land Run for Home calls on runners and health enthusiasts once more to race and help build homes

Run for Home 20 (I) singlet

Globe, the premier telecommunications service provider in the Philippines, holds its biggest annual run/walk — Globe-Ayala Land Run for Home 2010 — on March 21 at 5am at the Makati Central Business District.

Now on its second year, Globe-Ayala Land Run for Home aims to raise funds for the construction of habitat for humanity and help build homes for the homeless in Dasmariñas via Cabuyao in Laguna. A housing relocation site in Brgy. Sapang Cabuyao, Laguna, Dapecholan is the main beneficiary site for families that used to live along the Pasig River and its tributaries.

This marks the run will use environmentally friendly singlets made from recycled plastic (PET) bottles, a first here in the Philippines. To help the environment, the PET bottles are turned into plastic flakes and are processed to become chips, which are turned into filament yarn and shape fibre. These materials were used for the singlet that runners will game that day.

The runner's kit includes a singlet, electronic timing chip, race bib number, 30% discount coupon from New Balance and Photofinish.

The disposable electronic timing chip, called ChampionChip, will be used once more to accurately track the race time of participants. The ChampionChip is the Philippines' first and only running tem- chip that was first used in the Globe-Ayala Land Run for Home last July 19, 2009.

ChampionChips are disposable radio-frequency identification (RFID) transponders. These are made of waterproof glass capsules and transmit a unique identification number to track every runner's race time when they cross the finish.

Another unique attribute of this year's Globe-Ayala Land Run for Home is the use of the ChampionChip to auto-share race status updates to Facebook contacts. The runners may also sign up for the race can indicate their Facebook ID and email addresses when they register, and install the Facebook Run for Home Live Update application.

Participants can experience living among the world's first runners to send roadmade updates and race results to their Facebook profiles via the ChampionChip as they run past milestones designated here.

This year, Globe-Ayala Land Run for Home features 5K, 10K, 15K, 10K and 21K races along Ayala Ave. and Paseo de Roxas in the Makati Central Business District. The race starts at the Ayala Triangle Garden in Makati City.

Registration to Globe-Ayala Land Run for Home is from February 1 to March 5, 2010. Participants can sign up and pay online at www.globe.com.ph/run or register personally at the Globe Stores in Timpoka, Greenhills Hub, Glorietta, SM Megamall, Alabang Town Center, SM Mall of Asia, and Market! Market.

To register, buy a new Globe Tattoo broadband stick for P999 or any Globe Tattoo and get the runner's kit free. Or register to Globe PLDT for one month at P999 to postpaid and P400 for prepaid and get 10% off on the runner's kit.

Globe also encourages group runners as it offers special packages for group registration. Share will be discounts of up to 15 percent for groups who register for the diverse runs and up to P 2,000 off on registration fees for those in the longer distances.

Globe Platinum subscribers must present their Globe Platinum card upon payment of the registration fee and Globe will give additional P250 to be donated to Habitat for Humanity. Globe will add a P250 donation for every Globe Platinum subscriber who joins the run.

The runner's kit can be claimed upon completion registration on February 14 to March 5, 2010 from 11am to 9pm at participating Globe Stores.

Globe-Ayala Land Run for Home will award cash prizes to first, second and third male and female place finishers in each the 5K, 10K, 15K, 10K and 21K categories. Log on to check their race photos and post-run results and analyses at the Globe website. For more information visit www.globe.com.ph/run

Photo Joyce Nalupta

Running family

Running dogs

Warm-up exercise before the 21K race

Globe AyalaLand RUN FOR HOME 10

IN THIS ISSUE
■ BIR seen exceeding Feb. revenue goal /B2
■ North Harbor takeover set /B4

Editor Raul G. Manalo ● Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

BUSINESS

IN THIS ISSUE
■ ADB seen raising 2010 GDP forecast for Asia /B3
■ RP's rising energy needs to require 16,550 MW /B5

SMC bags MRT 7 project

$1.5-B rail line to link QC to Bulacan

By Dawne L. Lucas

DIVERSIFYING CONGLOMERATE SAN MIGUEL Corp. will take control of the $1.5-B Metro Rail Transit-Line 7 project by acquiring a majority stake in the firm that won the mandate for the deal, the Inquirer learned yesterday.

According to a source familiar with the transaction, the publicly listed firm was in the "advanced stages of negotiation" to take control of Universal MRT Corp., which is the consortium tasked to build the MRT 7 project.

The deal puts SMC in a position to benefit from the potentially lucrative commuter rail business between Metro Manila and the rapidly growing region to the north of the metropolis.

At present, the MRT 7 project is controlled by businessman Salvador "Buddy" Zamora II who, in turn, acquired majority control of the consortium in 2008 from its original proponent, Israeli businessman Dick Lewis.

MRT 7 is a build-"gradual transfer"-operate, maintain and manage project for the development, financing, operation and maintenance of a 22.8-kilometer light rail transit train that connects from the MRT Line 3's North Edsa terminal in San Jose del Monte, Bulacan.

The project also includes an intermodal Transport Terminal—a transportation hub for buses and other forms of public conveyances—in San Jose del Monte, as well as a 22-km, six-lane feeder highway from the northern end of the line to Bocaue, Bulacan. The highway will link the intermodal terminal to the North Luzon Expressway.

The source said the entry of SMC into the Universal MRT consortium is expected to be sealed "very soon," but declined to reveal the pricing terms for the deal.

As envisioned by the proponents, the rail component of MRT 7 project will initially operate 108 rail cars in a three-car train configuration. Initial capacity is projected at 440,000 passengers a day but will eventually be expanded to accommodate as many as 850,000 passengers daily.

The rail line will have 14 stations, namely: North Edsa, Quezon

(MRT) B6

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES

PESO DOLLAR RATE

₱46.810 = $1

As of 5 p.m., March 3, 2010

¥ 50.80 = $1

As of 5 p.m., March 3, 2010

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

(Go to stock market report on Page B2)

Stocks up on Wall St. rally

LOCAL STOCKS WRAPPED UP YESTERDAY alongside a slightly positive trading week in Wall Street.

The main share Philippine Stock Exchange index gained 7.4 points or 0.34 percent to close at 3,069.29 on some buying of blue chips and second-liner stocks bared at the end of the session.

Market gains by the industrial, holding firms, property, services and mining all to top offset the declines incurred by the financial counter.

About P3 billion worth of shares were

(STOCKS) B2

Meralco plans to go back into power generation

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE COUNTRY'S BIGGEST power retailer Manila Electric Co. may soon invest in its own power generation facilities in order to become an integrated power utility.

Meralco is considering building its own power plant using the regulatory leeway which allows it to buy up to 50 percent of the electricity it sells from affiliates, according to Manuel Pangilinan, managing director of First Pacific Co. Ltd., which controls the single biggest stake in Meralco.

Pangilinan said his group was supportive of Meralco's plan to go into power generation.

"We have encouraged Meralco to consider making an investment in generation. If you recall in its previous history, Meralco was actually in [power] generation," Pangilinan said.

He said Meralco would be interested in its power plans that were up for privatization or may even consider building a brand new power facility.

"Whatever makes sense to Meralco, we'll support that kind of initiative," he said.

(MERALCO) B6

Gov't OKs 16,000 tons of tax-free sugar imports

By Riza T. Olchondra

THE GOVERNMENT HAS GIVEN the go-ahead for private companies to import 16,000 tons of sugar tax-free using the National Food Authority's (NFA) import tariff exemption.

NFA Deputy Administrator Jose Gordon said that seven companies who passed the screening process during a Feb. 23 meeting would import the sugar for delivery in May. The private companies were given 60,000 tons.

Originally, 19 firms expressed interest to participate in the bidding of sugar import rights. However, only nine submitted bids and seven eventually qualified.

NFA marketing director Rosario Serrano said on Feb. 23 that the rest of the 60,000 tons may be re-auctioned or stored in the guidelines for the bidding.

However, traders said that the gap of 60,000 tons instead of 50k private sector interest in sugar imports as this time.

They said sugar prices were stabilizing, thus it made no sense to import especially with a set price.

The government set up the sugar rights under guidelines such that the traded sum would be around P52 a kilo for refined sugar since the bidders would be filling an 80% import tariff exemption.

If private companies will do not avail themselves of the re-warning scheme, the NFA has

(GOV'T OKS) B2

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Bayantel capex set at ₱1.4B

By Paolo G. Montecillo

LOPEZ-LED HARBOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS Inc. has set a budget of ₱1.4 billion for the year, partly for the development of its broadband Internet services to cater to the growing needs of small and medium enterprises (SME).

In line with this, the company expects to grow its broadband subscriber base by double-digit rates this year, sustaining last year's performance.

Bayantel's budget for this year is about the same as the 2009 level.

"Our growth in broadband was in the double-digit level last year and we expect another double-digit year in 2010," said Antonio Penero III, vice president of Bayantel's Enterprise segment.

He said the company's broadband base grew by 40 percent in 2009 to more than 100,000 subscribers. "We expect to maintain that rate of growth, or maybe even surpass that," he said.

Speaking to reporters in Makati on Wednesday, Penero said the company was investing heavily on the Multi-service Digital Transmission Network (MDTN), a network of fiber optic cables spanning the length of the entire country.

The MDTN is owned by a consortium of the country's seven major telecommunications firms' Bayan, Atlatel Communications Inc., Globe Telecommunications Inc., Express Telecommunications, Innove Communications, Philippine Telephone & Telegraph Co. (PT&T) and Digital Telecommunications Inc. (Digitel).

Bayan, however, owns about 60 percent of the network.

Bayantel currently owns a corporate rehabilitation, which it expects to exit in 2014 and is slated to end in 2023. At the end of 2009, Bayan said it had repaid about ₱4.65 billion out of about ₱15 billion in obligations.

BIR seen exceeding Feb. revenue goal

Campaign for greater visibility, public awareness of tax obligations

By Reinnel W. Domingo

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL Revenue is expected to have exceeded its target collection for the third month in a row, giving hope that the budget deficit is losing ap.

In an interview, Revenue Commissioner Jose L. Dan Torres said preliminary data indicated that the BIR might have executed its February collection target of ₱82.32 billion by some P3 billion.

As of Wednesday, "collections have reached ₱67.2.1 billion and we will see the target exceeded as more data come in in the next few days," Dan Torres said.

Dan Torres clarified that this was due in terms of "operational" collections, which means all taxes simply those shipped on January bills.

The chief accuses said operational collections for February had reached ₱44.9 billion or ₱5.8 billion beyond the target.

Collection of tax on Thills was about 19 billion or 1% billion short of the target for the month.

In 2009, the BIR met its monthly targets only twice, the second time being in November which was Dan Torres' first month as the agency's chief.

His predecessor Guss E. Espina left resigned in November, citing the absence he felt for the BIR "potentially" missing collection goals.

When asked how the BIR's past the numbers observed in the past three months would affect the government's fiscal position, Finance Secretary Margarito B. Teves said that trade will for the remainder of the budget deficit.

"Preliminary figures suggest improvement in the deficit figures over last year and over target," Teves said.

In the first quarter of 2009, the government spent ₱119.7 billion over its budget. For the same period of 2010, the gap is expected to be ₱71.13.94 billion.

Teves further attributes the BIR's tax-effort program, focusing on big-ticket items or the large tax payers, and close monitoring of "tax evading" measures.

Tax Torres added that the BIR structures that would complement these measures to meet its collection 2010 target of ₱836 billion.

Early this year, the government decided to import as much as 150,000 tons of raw sugar to ensure that the country will have enough buffer stock by the end of the milling season in August.

The SRA said the Philippines needs a buffer stock of 360,000 tons by the end of August to ensure that sugar prices will not go up after the milling season.

Bed and bait

IF, AS THEY SAY, A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE is a dangerous thing, do you think that a lot of it is lethal?

Maybe that was the reason why the country's two biggest tobacco companies gave the media only morsels of information on their unsuccessful consolidation.

Last week, Philip Morris Philippines Manufacturing (US-born multinational) and Fortune Tobacco (host of the Lucio Tan group) announced a new venture. And that was it. No further specifics!

The two companies just said they would come together in a consolidation, in effect pooling together their current businesses, both of them would cease to exist.

This was the important point. Nobody would absorb anybody; nobody loses anything. It was not a merger but literally, an outright merger through synergy.

As usual, speculations ran wild on the possible reason for the Lucio Tan's group giving up control of its flagship company, Family Bank, perhaps?

They said the Lucio Tan group went to bed with Philip Morris, not as a marriage decision but as a defensive move. Like it was a fault or something!

Me, I give the Lucio Tan group more credit than that. I thought it was actually a strategic move—and this applies to both Fortune and Philip Morris.

For one thing, the companies are about the same size, with Philip Morris Philippines posting revenue of about a little less than ₱82 billion a year, and Fortune Tobacco, a little more than ₱80 billion.

It was as if the two companies were made for each other.

* * *

It was startling news because, all of a sudden, just one company—i.e. the new venture—would account for about 90 percent of the country's cigarette market.

Based on reports quoting Chris Nelson, managing director of Philip Morris Philippines, the new company would still make the current brands of its two parents.

These are the popular Hope, Champion and Solo in the brands of the Lucio Tan side, and for the Philip Morris side, they are the Philip Morris and Marlboro brands. ("Marlboro" by the way is the world's leading cigarette brand.)

Notice that the Fortune brands are in the low-medium price categories, while those of Philip Morris are in the premium price ranges.

Together they can dominate the local cigarette market, virtually shutting the door to the new competitors from foreign companies.

Other cigarette firms were trying to move heaven and earth, or pay up everybody in this rare administration of Gloria, or whatchamacallem Sen, just to get into the 65 billion stick-a-year Philippine cigarette market.

Now they must contend with a much bigger and stronger competitor—the consolidated company of Fortune and Philip Morris.

* * *

Based on reports from abroad, which never done by professional market analysts, cigarette companies have must worry about more than just competition.

The analysts foresee a much slower growth rate in the local cigarette market. Why? Well, for one, because of the high taxes that seemed to get ever higher and higher!

Also, the market growth can reverse to be weakening. Well, the ban on cigarette ads could be one reason.

Minus the marketing weapon called advertising, the cigarette business here (thus actually becomes a logistics business.

Whichever company has the existing set up for marketing and distribution has the edge. This happens to be Fortune. And if Philip Morris must have seen that.

As for Fortune, well, it is actually partnering with an established, dominant multinational company, right?

Henry Sy, who is Lucio Tan's youngest brother, and who manages the group's vast real estate interests, hinted that by joining Philip Morris, Fortune was looking at its future growth.

As I said, Philip Morris is a multinational company. It is the world's leading international tobacco company, having seven of the world's top 15 brands.

Worldwide, Philip Morris has more than 77,000 employees, and its products are sold in more 160 countries.

And so what is in the consolidation for Fortune? Read my lips—export. The most exciting prospects for the local tobacco industry.

Need I say what good fortune awaits our tobacco farmers? As in any industry these days, even our tobacco industry needs to become global.

Hopefully, the new improved Philip Morris Fortune can help in that.

* * *

Now it can be told: Filipinas Shell was already set to announce that it could no longer sell oil products to the public, because of depleted inventory.

That was only last week, before the technocrats in the new administration were barely into their new bureaus. Filipinas Shell and the thieves of customs.

It all started when the BOC in Basilan, headed by Customs Collector Jum Tan, slapped the oil company with a ₱7.3-billion tri-alleged "back" taxes.

Tan was said to have somebody close to the new administration was after the ₱1.2-billion "reward" for the collection of the alleged "back" taxes.

Filipinas Shell reportedly went to court to contest Tan's imposition. It got a TRO. While the case was pending, meanwhile, it offered to post a surety bond.

So many unnamed people in the BOC (including the BOC boss Napoleon Blanden), as they demanded "cash" payment from Shell.

All the way from Batangas, Tan went against the SBO—plus the order from the Palace for a stamp ban—and ordered seizure of the Shell inventory.

That forced Cabinet members to step into the fight, namely, Finance Secretary Margarito Teves, Trade and Industry Secretary Peter Favila, Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes, and Solicitor General Alberto Agra.

They all said that the BOC should accept the surety bond offer of Shell.

Whew! Without them, the BOC action would have plunged the country into the worst fuel crisis ever. Still, Shell will assuredly not have more than 10 percent of our fuel supply.

And all this trouble for what—so that some syndicate could collect the P1.5 billion reward and divide it among themselves—is that it?

It is not enough for them that we are already suffering from power shortages!

BOSCH-TESDA PARTNERSHIP

Bosch regional sales director Mathew Custers (seen Bosch cordless power tools to Tesda Deputy Director General Pastor Quiza and Executive Director TS Guiño. Robert Bosch Inc., the sole Philippine distributor of Bosch power tools, and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority entered into a technical cooperation and development agreement to benefit the country's vast human resource in the construction industry.

From page B1

Gov't OKs 16,000 tons of tax-free ...

the option to bring the sugar in by itself, using to tariff exemption.

The government is set to forego ₱2.7 billion in lost revenue by allowing the tariff-free importation of sugar.

Sugar duty is at 10 percent so the Philippines is allowed by its trading partners to postpone tariff reductions for sugar and rice, which are deemed "sensitive products" for Manila.

While the 44,000 is hanging in the balance, the SRA board has approved an import replacement program, which allows manufactured traders and food exporters to bring in a combined 86,000 tons on a pro-rated basis.

Out of the 86,000 tons, qualified international traders based on SRA records are to bring in 80,000 tons and food processors, 6,000 tons.

Stocks up on Wall St. rally

From page B1

traded in the local bourse, with 68 advancers overwhelming 47 decliners and 54 unchanged stocks.

The gainers were led by Belle Corp., Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., Metro Pacific Investments Corp., Alliance Global Group Inc., SM Dan Resources International Inc. and Megaworld Corp.

On the other hand, the index gains were capped by the decline in the share prices of Energy Development Corp., Universal Robina Corp. and SM Prime Land.

Dealers said the market was cautious given that the main index was nearing a key resistance level at 3,100.

Jhaira C. Pantilao

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ADB seen raising 2010 GDP forecast for Asia

ILOILO Business Park gain: Peza certification: Philippine Economic Zone Authority Director General Lilia De Lima signs the certification granting tax perks and other incentives exclusive investors at Iloilo Business Park, Iloilo signing the certificate is Megaworld vice chair Miguel Ket-ah (left) with Megaworld SVP for business development Jovinie Go as witness. At l-r/marvin...Iloilo Business Park is the largest IT park yet of publicly listed Megaworld Corp.

NEW YORK—THE ASIAN DEVELopment Bank plans to revise upward its 2010 economic growth forecast for developing Asia to around 7 percent, citing the ability of some nations to quickly employ massive stimulus measures, the bank's top official said on Tuesday.

ADB President Haruhiko Kuroda told listeners ahead of a speech at the Japan Society that rapid rate of monetary and fiscal stimulus measures in developing Asia led to signs of a "V-shaped recovery."

In September the ADB forecast developing Asia's economic growth in 2010 would be 6.4 percent only to revise it up to 6.6 percent by December. The initial 2010 estimate was 6.0 percent.

"I think it is quite clear that further upward adjustment will be made. I foresee my own economic figures by maybe 0 should say around 7 percent," Kuroda said of a revised forecast the ADB expects to release in a report due in April.

Developing Asia's GDP will to 6 percent last year from 9.5 percent in 2007.

Kuroda, Japan's former top financial diplomat, said the rapid turnaround in growth in countries such as China, India and to a certain degree Indonesia, with their capacity to support public spending and personal consumption allowed them to withstand the sharp fall in external demand for exports.

So far as developing Asia is concerned, the recovery is firmly established. This year and next year it will grow very rapidly," Kuroda said.

The challenge will be to sustain that pace of recovery, and rolling back stimulus measures at the same time to ensure a difficult balancing act, he said.

"Timing may vary from country to country but, generally we believe that authorities in the region should maintain accommodative policies for now," Kuroda said.

At some stage they have to exit. As far as fiscal policy is concerned probably in cases countries they will continue to implement very stimulative policy measures to the end of the year. But next year maybe as some measures of them may start cutting from fiscal stimulus measures," he said.

Asia's export-led economic model however faces the challenge of no longer having a willing consumer of its exports as the developing world slows to spending and increased savings as a result of the financial crisis.

Kuroda said the region's balanced domestic demand and developed financial system by relaxing borrowing constraints, remaining barriers to international trade and regional cooperation.

The financial crisis only accelerates the pace of change toward interregional consumption rather than exports to North America or Europe.

Japan, the second largest economy in the world which will likely soon be surpassed by China, must deal with the twin challenges of aging population but on an income growth as well as years of accumulated debt. It is also struggling to overcome deflationary pressures.

Reuters

Further easing of forex policies urged

By Michelle V Remo

THE GOVERNMENT IS URGED to further liberalize its foreign exchange policies, specifically by allowing the free sale of gold, in the wake of a rising peso which has been the subject of renewed complaints from the export sector.

Joey Salceda, an economic adviser to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, said it was high time for the government to allow more financial institutions like the Social Security System and the Government Service Insurance System to invest offshore and in more foreign currency-denominated instruments.

The chances of these firms need to be unleashed so they can take advantage of income opportunities abroad.

Allowing them to do so, Salceda said, would increase demand for the dollar, thereby tempering the rise of the peso.

"The government should emphasize the next wave of foreign exchange liberalization," Salceda said at the sidelines of the 2010 Economic Briefing of the Bureau of Internal Revenue held at the Diliman Hotel in Makati City.

Salceda, who is also governor of Albay, said insurance firms and other private financial institutions should likewise be allowed to invest more freely in foreign assets. Current regulatory policies governing offshore investments were too stringent, forcing financial institutions to focus on virtually risk-free investments like government securities.

He said that without pushing for the liberalization of foreign exchange policies, the peso could strengthen toward the end of the year to as high as 42 to $1.

At the moment, 46 to a dollar level, exporters are already complaining and are pressuring the government to address the strengthening, claiming that it is dampening their competitiveness in the global market. The six-year sector particularly wants the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to intervene in the foreign exchange market by buying more dollars.

Salceda, however, said exporters could not expect much from the BSP because deliberately weakening the peso would run counter to its mandate of keeping the increase in consumer prices at minimal as possible.

A weak peso, although beneficial to exporters, makes imported goods more expensive, thereby accelerating inflation.

In a speech during yesterday's briefing, BSP Governor Amando Tetangco said the central bank would maintain the policy of allowing a market-determined exchange rate.

Under the BSP's current policy stance, it intervenes in the foreign exchange market only to avoid sharp and sudden appreciation or depreciation of the peso, to avoid disrupting the operations of exporters and importers. The BSP said it would not be located in favor of a weak or strong peso.

Salceda also said the government should promote having more "corporate OFWs (overseas Filipino workers)," or Filipino firms expanding offshore, as an other means of allowing the outflow of capital and tempering the rise of the peso.

ATS '09 profit grew by 559%

By Paolo G. Montecillo

LISTED SHORTLINE TRANSPORT SYSTEM Corp. posted a six-fold increase in its profit in 2009, largely due to lower fuel costs which more than made up for the decline in demand and sticky overall operating conditions.

In a disclosure, ATS reported a net income of P546 million in 2009, up from only P83 million in the previous year.

This was achieved despite a 19 billion drop in consolidated revenue brought about by a decline in freight earnings by recreational ship chartering revenue likewise decreased by P1.3 billion due to a 46-percent market...the company said.

In September 2009, ATS said it also lost a ship, having the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) to temporarily suspend the co-founder of the company's fleet.

"The greatly affected freight and passenger business. All vessels ultimately passed the Marina's audit and inspection and were cleared for sailing shortly after the suspension," the company said.

The last quarter of 2009 was also plagued by devastating typhoons, affecting several operations, ATS added.

"[But] the bunkering of Fuel-run, ATS single largest expense item, has led to a P2.6 billion decline in operating expenses and 56-percent improvement in earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (earnings) of P1.3 billion in 2009," the company said.

ATS said its Inter-Freight business contributed 25 billion in 2009, an 8-percent or P934 million decrease from year-ago level. Its passenger business revenue fell by P533 million to P1.2 billion from P2.6 billion in 2008.

Inflation seen at only 4% this year

INFLATION IN 2010 MAY SETTLE AT 4 percent, below the official forecast of 4.7 percent, with the declining prices of oil in the world market seen tempering the adverse impact of the 12 NHo-by spell on consumer prices.

This was according to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, which yesterday allayed fears that domestic prices might shoot up to beyond target levels because of the supply-dampening caused by an extended dry season.

Diwa Guinigundo, BSP Deputy Governor, said in an economic briefing yesterday that the central bank would review its average inflation forecast of 4.7 percent for 2010 amid a favorable trend of moves in the global market in the first two months of the year.

"El Niño has an impact on prices, but we may see inflation settling at 4 percent because of the decline in oil prices in January and February," Guinigundo said.

Based on central bank estimates, Guinigundo said supply-related problems caused by El Niño would accelerate inflation by as much as 0.4 percentage points this year. Nonetheless, the declining prices of oil in recent months will offset the impact of El Niño on domestic prices.

The Philippines imports more than 90 percent of its oil requirements, making the domestic inflation highly vulnerable to global oil price developments.

In January, inflation settled at 4.3 percent, lower than the BSP's forecast of between 4.5 and 5.4 percent.

In February, the BSP expects inflation to have settled at a range of 5.4 to 4.5 percent.

Guinigundo said price movements in the first two months of the year made it possible for the full-year average inflation to settle below the original inflation forecast of 4.7 percent.

A 4-percent inflation for the year would be within the official target of between 3.5 and 5.5 percent, which was set a few years back under the government's medium-term economic goals.

Guinigundo said the BSP would continue to monitor price factors that would cause that inflation may leap outside the official targets.

The BSP will also continue to support an environment of low interest environment to boost growth of the economy, as long as this will not cause inflation to breach targets.

From December 2008 to July 2009, the BSP implemented a series of interest rate cuts. This is to allow other banks to reduce their own lending rates, thus encourage borrowings by individuals and corporate entities. Borrowings should spur consumption and investments, monetary officials said.

This year, however, the BSP said it was already prepared to lift some of the stimulus measures it implemented earlier amid projections of recovery.

Officials said the monetary might bring about inflationary pressures, which could lead to faster-than-target inflation if left unmonitored.

Officials, however, said the BSP's key policy rates would be the last of the stimulus measures to be lifted. Others may be first to...normal, such as the previous reduction of rules on discount lending by the BSP.

The BSP's key policy rates current in stand at 4 percent and 6 percent for overnight borrowing and lending, respectively. Michelle V. Remo

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By Eugene Go, Vice President for Marketing, I.E. Unitrade Merchandise, Inc.

By Greg Barbizon, General Manager, RSM Corporation

As in previous years, 100% of the proceeds will go to various advocacies in the field of education and youth empowerment. This year's beneficiaries are the MarkProf Foundation, the Gifts and Graces Fair Trade Foundation, and the Foundation for Asian Consumer Insighting & Market Understanding (FACIMU). For registrations and inquiries, you may contact us at (02) 584 3050 / 584 0999 / 722 2318 / 412 0954, text 0918 811 168 08, email us at info@mastermilk.net, or visit us at www.mastermilk.net.

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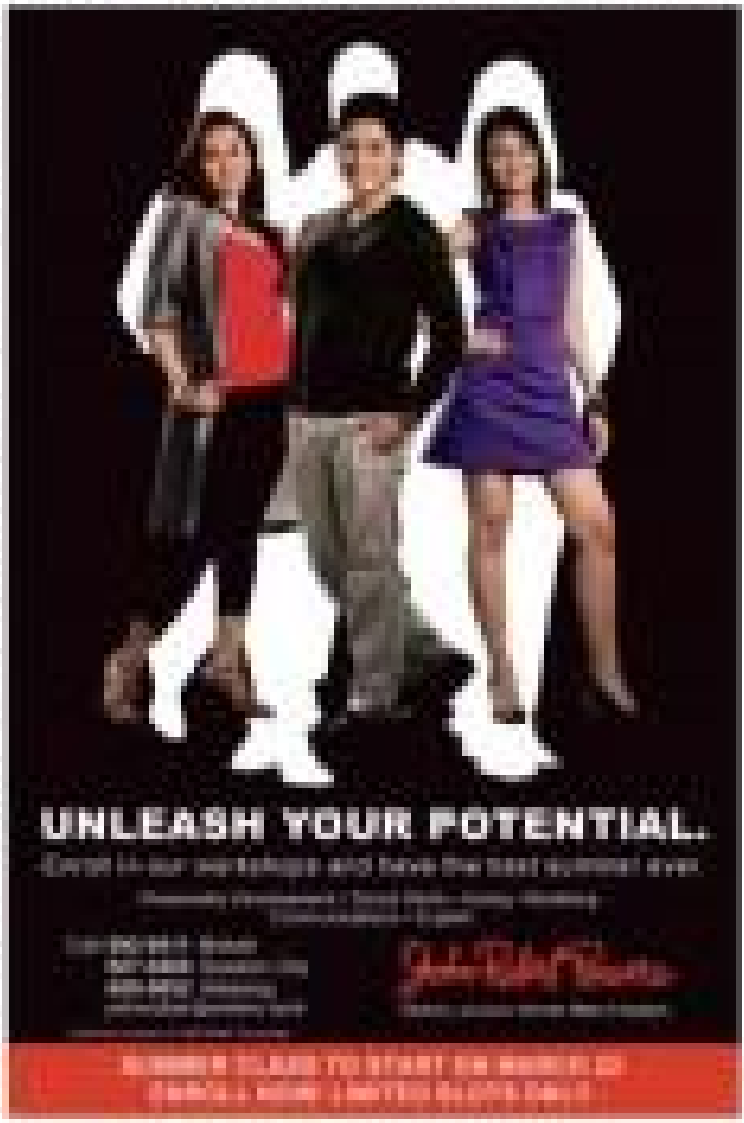

SM Investments net income jumps 14% to ₱16B

By Doris C. Dumlao

SM INVESTMENTS CORP. (SM INVESTMENTS) Corp. last year posted a net income of ₱16 billion, up 14 percent from a year ago, on an increase in the board revenue in profit contributions by its retailing, banking, shopping mall and property development businesses.

SMIC posted a 9 percent growth in consolidated revenues to ₱100.1 billion from ₱91.9 billion. Cash flow as measured by earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (Ebitda) grew 23 percent to ₱34.3 billion, for an Ebitda margin of 27 percent, which improved from the previous year's 19 percent.

Retailing maintained the most in the year's net income with a 35.3 percent share. This was followed by banking and shopping malls, which chipped in 27.4 percent and 26.1 percent, respectively. The enterprise property group accounted for 11 percent.

"We are pleased to report that SM achieved its goals in 2009, in spite of the formidable challenges brought about by the spate of natural calamities in the country and the continued weaknesses in the global economy. We continue to learn from every crisis situation that it pays to stay very focused on our strengths and on our long-term plans for further expansion, keeping in mind the synergies we can tap among our different businesses to achieve greater financial and operational efficiency," SM Investments Harley Ito said in a statement yesterday.

The retail group reported a full-year net income of ₱5.4 billion, up 27.9 percent due to gains in its food and non-food businesses. This translated to an average net margin of 3.6 percent, up from 3 percent in the previous year. Of total retail sales, the non-food group, which is composed of SM Department Stores, contributed 42.8 percent, while the food group, SM Supermarket, SM Savemore stores, SM Hypermarkets, and Shaker outlets) accounted for 57.2 percent.

The robust performance of the retailing group was attributed to a more focused approach in merchandising fresh designs and innovations of coming stores that give customers a more "contemporary" and "up scale" look and feel. The food group, on the other hand, focused on further improving its cost and operational efficiencies even as it continued to expand its SaveMore business, which opened 12 stores in 2009.

Overall, the retail group opened 26 stores, bringing the total number of stores to 119 by the end of last year. These consist of 36 department stores, 20 supermarkets, 26 SaveMore branches, 29 hypermarkets and 12 Shaker outlets.

For 2010, the retail group plans to open another 12 to 16 stores each to planned capital expenditures of ₱6 billion.

Mall developer SM Prime Holdings Inc. reported a consolidated net income of ₱7 billion for the year, up by 10 percent over a year ago. Its Ebitda grew by 14 percent to ₱11 billion, for an Ebitda margin of 68 percent. These results included the opening of the three SM malls in Ormoc, which are located in the cities of Xiamen and Jinjiang in southern China, and Chengdu in central China.

Rental fees, which accounted for 96 percent of total revenues, totalled ₱17.7 billion, for a 13 percent increase year on year. Growth was driven mainly by new malls and the expansion of existing malls, although same store sales also grew 3 percent.

Retailing contributes 35% of profit

Security Bank bags top honors in PDS awards

SECURITY BANK CORP. HAS BAGGED THE 2010 "Best Securities House" award by the Philippine Dealing System Holdings Corp. and Subsidiaries (PDS) group for the fifth consecutive year.

This year, the most prestigious award has been renamed "Gene Lim Vitug Award" in honor of the veteran banker and former prime minister who was a key proponent of the establishment of the fixed-income trading platform in the country.

Aside from bagging the issue titans award, Security Bank was also the top fixed-income broker as well as the top fixed-income dealing participant in the market.

It was also ranked as the top fixed-income cash settlement bank.

The bank's president, Alfonso Villanueva, and treasurer Rafael Algarra Jr. received the awards.

Among others, the top five foreign exchange dealers were: BNP Bank, Banco de Oro Unibank, Security Bank, Standard Chartered Bank and Citibank N.A.

Top performers in the PDS group's community of infrastructure members, participants and users are awarded broker-based points and their performance in the markets.

Special awards this year were also given to trading private issuers in the debt market—San Miguel Brewery Inc. for its landmark ₱20.8 billion offering; Energy Development Corp., as the first corporate security to be listed simultaneously on the stock, debt, and fixed-income boards; and Trust Bank, for issuing the first bank float listed on the Philippine Dealing and Exchange Corp. (PDEX).

PDS group president Monette Guerilla said, "2009 was indeed a milestone year for the market. We are seeing significant changes in the market as our stakeholders seized the opportunities presented by the organized market."

Doris C. Dumlao

MPIC profit surged 337% to ₱2.3B in '09

INFRASTRUCTURE HOLDING firm Metro Pacific Investments Corp. grew its 2009 net profit by 337 percent to ₱2.3 billion from the year before on strong contributions from its water distributors, toll road and health care businesses, as well as share of revenues from a new investment in power retailer Manila Electric Co.

Core net income amounted to ₱2.85 billion or much higher than the restated net income of ₱654 million in 2008. Both of one-time exceptional gains of ₱951 million came from the sale-rebasing exercise at water distributor, now Maynilad Water Services Inc.

Consolidated operating revenues amounted to ₱18.71 billion or about three the ₱5.04 billion revenues in 2008. Of this, ₱18.41 billion came from water and sewerage services and ₱5.3 billion from toll fees.

Maynilad contributed ₱1.05 billion or 55 percent of total profit contribution from operations, representing MPIC's attributable interest in the concern.

Tollway unit Metro Pacific Tollways Corp. pumped in ₱1.31 billion to net income from operations while the healthcare group contributed ₱174 million or 5 percent of the total. In addition, MPIC investments in Meralco added ₱611 million of equitized core earnings for the four quarters of 2009.

"The strong improvement and momentum across all our businesses, including the impact of Meralco's contribution, have driven the impressive growth in our consolidated results for 2009," MPIC president Jose Ma. Lim said.

Asked about the outlook for this year, MPIC chair Manuel V. Pangilinan said the older operating units—Maynilad, toll ways and hospitals—were likely to deliver better results. As the units ripen, MPIC is seen benefiting from a full year of equity earnings of Meralco as well from its joint business with the joint operations of Manila North Harbour.

Maynilad has allotted ₱6.5-₱7 billion for capital expenditures this year.

MPTC is currently negotiating with the water operated Power Conversion Development Authority for the long-term concession to operate the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (SCTEx) and the Philippine National Construction Corp.'s monopoly stake in South Luzon Expressway.

Fernandez said MPTC may increase its public float—whether through a follow-on initial public offering or private placement—this year to comply with the requirement of the Philippine Stock Exchange to keep its shares listed.

For the hospital business, about ₱800 million has been allotted but this excludes another ₱1.92 billion that the group may need to acquire new hospitals.

For South Harbour, about ₱1 billion had been budgeted for the group's infrastructure development in this modest port project.

Doris C. Dumlao

DISCLOSURES

SAN MIGUEL Brewery Inc. disclosed on Feb. 26 the election and appointment of Carmelo L. Santiago as independent director and chair of the audit committee vice Hiyas Tolosa.

* * *

CENTRAL Azucarera de Bais, disclosed on Feb. 26 the election of the following as directors of the company until Jan. 25, 2011, to fulfill the election and qualification of their successors: Pedro Cojuangco, Jonathan C. Reyes, Jose Cojuangco Jr., Ernesto G. Tengson, Jose Manuel C. Luna and Gerry Gilbert Ilarde and Fulgencio S. Factoran Jr. as independent directors.

* * *

UNIVERSAL Robina Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 13 at 3 p.m. at the Ruby Ballroom, Holiday Inn Subic-I Manila, The Asian Development Bank Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City. Stockholders of record as of March 17 will be entitled to vote at the said meeting.

* * *

ORIENTBANK Head Bank will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 15 at 4 p.m. at the Ruby Ballroom, Holiday Inn Subic-I Manila, The Asian Development Bank Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City. Stockholders of record as of March 17 will be entitled to vote at the said meeting.

* * *

ALLIED Banking Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 21 at 10 a.m. at the Allied Bank Center, 6754 Ayala Avenue, Makati City. Stockholders of record as of March 19 will be entitled to notice of, and to vote at, the said meeting.

* * *

GOTESCO Savings Bank Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 21 at 9 a.m. at the 7th floor, Corydon Center Building, 105 Ortigas Ave., Pasig City. Stockholders of record as of March 12 will be entitled to notice of, and to vote at, the said meeting.

BELLE CORP. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 21 at the SEC Committee Center, 3M Hall of Trade Complex, Pasig City. Stockholders of record as of March 31 will be entitled to notice of, and to vote at the said meeting.

Compiled by Ashanti Bondoc, Inquirer Research

Meralco ...

From page B1

At present, he said only 25 percent or half of the headroom for Meralco to source from affiliate power generation companies equivalent to 1,200 megawatts was being used. This is the position being assured from the power plants of the Lopez family, which remains as a small but crucial ally of Pangilinan's group in Meralco.

Asked where Meralco would most likely have its own power plant, Pangilinan said: "Maybe possibly in Luzon, but it's still limiting itself. The focus will be Luzon and within its franchise area."

SMC bags ...

From page B1

southbound Circle, University Avenue, Tandang Sora, Don Antonio, Batasan, Marcelo Fernan, Dona Carmen, Regalado, Mindanao Avenue, Quirino, Second Street, Tala and Araneta-San Jose Del Monte.

The interrelated terminal, on the other hand, will be able to accommodate 60 buses and will also feature passenger facilities and amenities.

The entire ₱1.3-billion project is expected to be fully completed in 45 months, although portion of it may be made operational in phases.

Once completed, SMC will operate and maintain the rail section, the interrelated terminal and the highway for a period of 25 years. The government will get a 39-percent share of net passenger revenues and a 20 percent share of other revenues.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

as of March 3, 2010

CURRENCIES

March 3, 2010 Country	Unit	Cash Equivalent	Bank Selling	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.021553	0.021553	46.3637
Japan	Yen	1.930775	1.930775	0.5180
United Kingdom	Pound	1.396451	1.396451	0.7161
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.166936	0.166936	5.9907
Australia	Dollar	0.024000	0.024000	41.6700
Canada	Dollar	0.022000	0.022000	45.4545
Singapore	Dollar	0.031000	0.031000	32.2581
Switzerland	Franc	0.024000	0.024000	41.6667
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.069000	0.069000	14.4928
Thailand	Baht	0.709000	0.709000	1.4104
South Korea	Won	25.000000	25.000000	0.0400
Sweden	Krona	0.154000	0.154000	6.4935
Denmark	Krone	0.118000	0.118000	8.4746
Norway	Krone	0.120000	0.120000	8.3333
Saudi Arabia	Riyal	0.080000	0.080000	12.5000
UAE	Dirham	0.079000	0.079000	12.6582
Kuwait	Dinar	0.006000	0.006000	172.4138
Qatar	Riyal	0.078000	0.078000	12.8205
Bahrain	Dinar	0.008000	0.008000	125.0000
Oman	Rial	0.008000	0.008000	125.0000
China	Yuan	0.147000	0.147000	6.8027
Taiwan	Dollar	0.704000	0.704000	1.4205
India	Rupee	0.997000	0.997000	1.0030
Austria	Euro	0.032000	0.032000	31.2500
Belgium	Euro	0.032000	0.032000	31.2500
Finland	Euro	0.032000	0.032000	31.2500
France	Euro	0.032000	0.032000	31.2500
Germany	Euro	0.032000	0.032000	31.2500
Ireland	Euro	0.032000	0.032000	31.2500
Italy	Euro	0.032000	0.032000	31.2500
Netherlands	Euro	0.032000	0.032000	31.2500
Portugal	Euro	0.032000	0.032000	31.2500
Spain	Euro	0.032000	0.032000	31.2500
Greece	Euro	0.032000	0.032000	31.2500
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Vietnam	Dong	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Russia	Ruble	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Brazil	Real	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Mexico	Peso	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Turkey	Lira	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
South Africa	Rand	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Egypt	Pound	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Czech Republic	Koruna	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Hungary	Forint	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Poland	Zloty	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Romania	New Leu	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Slovakia	Koruna	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Slovenia	Tolar	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Bulgaria	Lev	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Estonia	Kroon	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Latvia	Lat	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Lithuania	Litas	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Ukraine	Hryvnia	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Iceland	Krona	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Israel	Shekel	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Pakistan	Rupee	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Kazakhstan	Tenge	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Chile	Peso	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Peru	Nuevo Sol	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Argentina	Peso	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Colombia	Peso	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Sri Lanka	Rupee	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Jordan	Dinar	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Lebanon	Pound	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Tunisia	Dinar	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Morocco	Dirham	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Nigeria	Naira	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Kenya	Shilling	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Zimbabwe	Dollar	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Bangladesh	Taka	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Vanuatu	Vatu	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Fiji	Dollar	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Papua New Guinea	Kina	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Solomon Islands	Dollar	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Samoa	Tala	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Tonga	Pa'anga	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Brunei	Dollar	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Cambodia	Riel	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Laos	Kip	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Myanmar	Kyat	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Nepal	Rupee	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Mauritius	Rupee	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Namibia	Dollar	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Swaziland	Lilangeni	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Botswana	Pula	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Zambia	Kwacha	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Malawi	Kwacha	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Mozambique	Metical	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Angola	Kwanza	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Tanzania	Shilling	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Uganda	Shilling	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Ghana	Cedi	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Zaire	Zaire	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Rwanda	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Burundi	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Somalia	Shilling	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Djibouti	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Eritrea	Nakfa	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Ethiopia	Birr	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Sudan	Dinar	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Libya	Dinar	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Algeria	Dinar	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Mauritania	Ouguiya	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Gambia	Dalasi	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Guinea	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Sierra Leone	Leone	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Liberia	Dollar	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Ivory Coast	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Burkina Faso	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Mali	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Niger	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Togo	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Benin	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Cameroon	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Central African Republic	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Chad	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Congo	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Equatorial Guinea	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Gabon	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Comoros	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Madagascar	Ariary	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Seychelles	Rupee	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Cape Verde	Escudo	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Guinea-Bissau	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Sao Tome & Principe	Dobra	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Mauritius	Rupee	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Namibia	Dollar	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Swaziland	Lilangeni	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Botswana	Pula	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Zambia	Kwacha	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Malawi	Kwacha	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Mozambique	Metical	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Angola	Kwanza	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
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Uganda	Shilling	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Ghana	Cedi	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Zaire	Zaire	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Rwanda	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Burundi	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Somalia	Shilling	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Djibouti	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Eritrea	Nakfa	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Ethiopia	Birr	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Sudan	Dinar	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Libya	Dinar	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Algeria	Dinar	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Mauritania	Ouguiya	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Gambia	Dalasi	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Guinea	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Sierra Leone	Leone	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Liberia	Dollar	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Ivory Coast	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Burkina Faso	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Mali	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Niger	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Togo	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Benin	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Cameroon	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Central African Republic	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Chad	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Congo	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Equatorial Guinea	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Gabon	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Comoros	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Madagascar	Ariary	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Seychelles	Rupee	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Cape Verde	Escudo	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Guinea-Bissau	Franc	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000
Sao Tome & Principe	Dobra	0.000000	0.000000	0.0000

BUSINESS

Asian stocks rise amid Greece hopes

Markets gain for 4th straight day

HONG KONG—ASIAN STOCK MARKETS rose yesterday amid growing hopes of a solution to Greece's financial crisis.

Major markets added less than 1 percent as the region extended its gains for a fourth straight day.

The dollar was lower against the yen and the euro, while oil prices were little changed.

Worries about Greece's ability to stabilize its finances have eased in recent days amid speculation European leaders will orchestrate a bailout and the government will take needed steps to reduce its mountain of debt.

Greece's prime minister is set to announce deeper spending cuts later Wednesday, if the measures are tough enough, that could pave the way for a lifeline when Greek and German leaders meet on Friday, analysts said.

Further helping sentiment were overnight gains in the United States, where stocks rose a third day amid renewed confidence that business leaders expect the economic recovery to stick.

In currencies, the dollar fell to 80.60 yen from 80.80 yen. The euro strengthened to $1.3647 from 1.3615.

Benchmark crude for April delivery was up 3 cents to $79.77, a barrel in Asia. The contract rose 90 cents to settle at $79.68 on Tuesday.

In the US Tuesday, the Dow rose 2.19, or less than 0.1 percent, to 13,405.90. It is up 80 points in three days and is at its highest level since Jan. 23.

The broader Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 2.60, or 0.2 percent, to 1,418.91, and the Nasdaq rose 7.32, or 0.3 percent, to 3,280.79. AP

In Japan, the Nikkei 225 stock average edged up 15.43 points, or 0.2 percent, to 10,237.47.

South Korea's Kospi was up 6.2 percent at 1,830.06 and Hong Kong's Hang Seng was little changed at 20,991.87.

Elsewhere, Australia's market rose 0.7 percent, lifted by news the country's economy expanded quickly last quarter. Indian stocks added 0.7 percent and Shanghai's market was 0.4 percent higher.

ECB readies next steps in exit strategy

FRANKFURT— THE GREEK DEBT CRISIS is grabbing the headlines but the European Central Bank will likely focus on more mundane "exit strategies" from stimulus policy when top officials meet today, analysts say.

"The two key items to watch will be the presumed announcements on the exit strategy from the present liberal liquidity provisions as well as their new forecasts" for growth and inflation, Goldman Sachs economist Erik Nielsen said.

Though economic growth has faltered, ECB policymakers are determined to carefully unwind unorthodox measures taken in 2008 to keep the financial system from following US investment bank Lehman Brothers into total collapse.

"There is clearly a great desire to return to normality," Nielsen said, which could mean ending exceptional ECB aims over three months and moving to things variable rates again rather than the fixed 1 percent.

The ECB's main interest rate will certainly remain at this record low for December, probably throughout the year, most economists say.

"The ECB is endlessly to refresh dramatically the road map of its exit strategy in the wake of Greek woes, at least not in this stage," said Marco Annunziata, chief economist at UniCredit Group.

Fresh forecasts by the bank's staff for economic growth and inflation will be released today meanwhile, with many analysts expecting the previous estimate for 0.8 percent growth this year to remain essentially unchanged.

Inflation should again be seen near 1.2 percent for 2012 as well, after falling in February for the first time since mid-2009 to 2.7 percent.

A weak eurozone economy and 9.9 percent unemployment in January have kept pressure on prices although the euro's fall owing to the Greek crisis could push up energy costs in coming months and feed through the system.

In Frankfurt, ECB president Jean-Claude Trichet will face questions on the Greek crisis, after officials in Athens are expected to have announced more austerity measures demanded by eurozone partners and financial markets.

Measures already decided by the government—including tax increases and public service benefit cuts—have sparked anger among many ordinary Greeks.

Alarm sparked by a massive Greek public strike and debt has also put pressure on eurozone members Italy, Portugal and Spain and caused some analysts to question whether the eurozone itself will weather the crisis. AFP

Apple sues Taiwan's HTC

SAN FRANCISCO—APPLE INC SUED TAIwan's HTC Corp., which makes touchscreen smartphones using Google software, accusing it of infringing 20 hardware and software patents related to the iPhone.

Even though the suit did not name Google Inc as a defendant, Apple's move was viewed by many analysts as proxy for an attack on the Internet company, whose Nexus One smartphone is manufactured by HTC.

Apple's suit was filed with both the US International Trade Commission and the US District Court in Delaware on Tuesday, and seeks to prohibit HTC from selling, marketing or distributing infringing products in the United States.

The complaint filed with the ITC cited Google's Nexus One, which was launched in January, and other HTC phones such as the Droc, Incredible and myTouch... which run on Google's Android mobile operating system... as infringing products.

In a statement, a Google spokeswoman said: "We are not a party to this lawsuit. However, we stand behind our Android operating system and the partners who have helped us to develop it."

In a separate disclosure to the Taiwan stock exchange, HTC said it will not see any impact on its financial outlook for the first quarter from the lawsuit.

Apple's newer rumors amid fierce competition in the smartphone market, as new players angle for a piece of the fast-growing segment.

Mark Simpson, a patent attorney with law firm Saul Ewing in Philadelphia, said HTC stands for an easier target than Google.

The iPhone held a 14.4 percent smartphone market share in 2009, according to research group Gartner.

Phones running Android competed only 2.9 percent of the market, but were growing fast. Apple last some share to Android phones in the fourth quarter.

Apple's lawsuit is the latest scrape over ownership of the underlying technology for smartphones — handsets that play video and music, take pictures and send e-mail. Reuters

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SMART GOLD

MASTER chef Alain Ducasse

LIFESTYLE Food

Dinner with Ducasse

The four-course meal with celebrated French chef Alain Ducasse was the main event—until something unexpected followed

By Anna C. Sobrepeña
Contributor

IT WAS A DINNER NOT TO BE missed. Much was going on that night, but for serious food enthusiasts, there was only one destination: Alain Ducasse had flown into town to inaugurate NOW! Nobuko, and on the first night he was here, Restaurant 101 was serving Les Classiques d'Alain Ducasse.

Even if the man known as the king of modern French cuisine was not working the kitchen, it was a major feat for anyone to be napping in his presence, dining on a four-course meal that had his signature written all over the plated dishes.

Guests milled in the garden where a choral performance presented little speeches that gave due acknowledgment to the partners of the event. Jean Rhonne stood tall at the table, along with Shangri-La Properties' Peggy Angeles and her husband Pipo. Besides being a major sponsor, the affable area general manager of the Shangri-La facilities in the country is a culinary maestro of no small means. He subscribed to the theories of the school widely recognized for graduating students with a degree in International Hospitality Management.

Discovery Suites general manager Bobby Rodriguez was beside chef David Bydlo de Agnolia, who unabashedly expressed his admiration for the guest of honor. Closer to the front, Linda Ross stood near Carol Garcia and Charlie Gotianquez, listening to the opening remarks. Her floral arrangements were not only the centerpieces of the dinner tables that night but served as a backdrop to the elevation which served as a stage.

Many of the persons in attendance were epicures and gourmets. Guests were spread to the atrium and Restaurant 101. The Bedrose owners and board members sat in the presidential table with Ducasse. On lush beds were Rosanna Peres and Jocma Galicia with his wife Lia.

To the left and the right of the celebrated honoree was Philippe Gbaffou and Thomas Nemmer. Completing their table was Erlea Ubaldo, Jack and Leonie Tumen, and Gina Albert.

Rina and Fely Antonio's table in the atrium had Jaime Augusto and Linda Zobel de Ayala, Eduard and Jessica Mualim, Miguel and Barbara Rhein.

Hosting their own tables were John Tia and Sean Henri Ubaldo; Lauro and Grace Baja had a private space to themselves.

Others present were Ricky and Vicky Delgado, Chris and Katrina Nite, Gretchen Gonzaga and her daughter Lia Echaluce-Cruz.

Also seen were Lisa and Bongbong Marcos, who, someone said, had dined in all of the restaurants of Alain Ducasse.

1PINT Lobster in Coco Bisque Pasta and Chutney

WILD Salmon à la Nage with Green Olive Oil Dressing

Tribute to nature

The collaboration in the kitchen was a yearslong tandem of chefs Nicolas Sturaro and Timothy Boggs who are both part of the Alain Ducasse Formation or Conseil. Their opening salvo was Asperges Cuit à la Nage Petit rémoli Emulsion d'Huile d'Olive au Yuzu et la Nage translates as "in the

SEE PAGE C2

WHAT'S ON AT ROBINSONS

MARK HENRY

Feel the beat when this new groove is pumped in through the stereo system! "The Greatest Groove" from Universal Records.

Mall

Ducasse—what makes him the 'Finest Chef in the World'

By Norma O. Chikiamco
Contributor

WAITING FOR MY TURN TO INTERVIEW Alain Ducasse, one of the world's most celebrated chefs, at Bedrose College, I felt as if I was about to enter the school principal's office.

Will he be nice or mean? Will our meeting be pleasant or cataclysmic? Days before he arrived, the stringent rules of protocol his handlers had given to the press had made him seem distant and unapproachable, as if he were a dictatorial head of state, or the obsessive-compulsive perfectionist, rather than a chef whose business is to nourish people.

During the press conference following his arrival, his smiles had been few and far between. He spoke only in French, relying on translator Anna Ramos to relay his thoughts to his audience. In addition, there was a strict 15-minute limit allowed to each interviewer during the one-on-one segment.

When the moment came to finally meet him up close, Ducasse turned out to be different. He smiled more. He seemed warmer, friendlier. As he expounded on his ideas, I thought I caught a glimpse of the genius behind the enterprise that includes the Alain Ducasse Formation, three culinary schools in France, and 25 restaurants around the world, three of which have been honored with the coveted three Michelin stars.

How he keeps tabs on such a far-reaching global enterprise is part of this genius. Personally choosing his chefs is one thing, knowing whom to choose is another.

Ducasse said he can easily pick from an entire roster of wannabe's those who have talent and those who don't, those who will stay and those who won't.

"I can tell quickly if they'll fit into our philosophy," he said. After that, it's a matter of training them and watching them.

"I design the culinary concept. I collaborate with the chefs and this collaboration is already 65 percent of the dish. I taste, we adjust, and that's the other 35 percent," he said.

Work ethic

Delegating the day-to-day operations to his chefs, he expects them to carry out their tasks well.

"The work ethic is there and there's complete trust. They prepare lunch and dinner every day, so in this regard, they're better than me. They have this desire to do better and better, precisely because I'm not there."

Where he's there, he said, they'll just expect him to fix things. Instead, he has put them on semi-pilot and they're on self-drive.

Indeed, as critic Steven Shaw once said in his article "Culinary Conveyance": "The real test of a chef's greatness is not how well he cooks, but how well the kitchen runs when he is not around. The world's best chef is the one who has rendered himself the most dispensable."

As dispensable as he has made himself in his restaurants, Ducasse succeeded. It's still good to read tests his chefs. He cited the example of one chef who had spent five years in New York and five years in Tokyo. Now

SUCCESS C2

> "The real test of a chef's greatness is not how well he cooks, but how well the kitchen runs when he is not around"

ENROLLMENT IS NOW GOING ON

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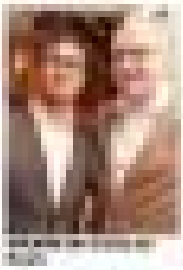
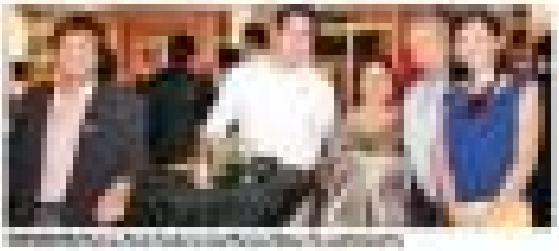
Dinner with Ducasse





Ducasse–what makes him the 'Finest Chef in the World'

Alain Ducasse goes to market

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From vegetables to 'lechon'—'organic' is the way to go

WE ALL WANT TO EAT VEGetables free from pesticides, chemicals, hormones, etc. the feeling finds its fruit parent some way a problem, until Teresa Perkins and Loren Manzano joined forces and formed My Personal Farmer.

Bonde visited Bukidnon with her husband and was not just mesmerized by Mr. Krushel's beauty. She was also thoroughly impressed by the state of Loren's homegrown vegetables.

"Loren has worked the bare ground of pesticides and herbicides for 15 years," she said. So the Perkins asked Loren to send them a box of vegetables regularly.

"My husband is very particular about food, being a total health buff. He can only eat vegetables especially after we learned that, in one cycle, a vegetable can be sprayed up to 48 times with chemicals and pesticides!"

The vegetables in the Perkins residence was such a hit among family and friends that they asked Loren to order vegetables for them as well.

This was how My Personal Farmer came to be—the operation patterned after the CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) in the US.

Perkins, with the help of her friends, put a group of people together to help support organic farmers and called it "Village Supported Agriculture" (VSA), where people in the neighborhood "support the families of a group of agriculturists by [Loren]."

Loren and his team will be your personal farmer, dedicating his hard work and lengthy experience to giving you a healthy, nutritious diet weekly. You, on the other hand, will be dedicated to be the new market to making this Village Supported Agriculture sustainable," explained Perkins.

"The farm produces and delivers a special box of fresh, naturally and organically grown produce weekly for your family. It's more nutritious, long shelf-life and more cost-effective than eating. The vegetables come fresh from the farm to your village at competitive prices."

There's also what is called a "Village Morning Wiggle," as opposed to rush village. For home delivery, the weekly drop off point for the produce. Our advocacy is to help provide families around her with naturally and organically grown produce still be concluded with free vegetables. For suppose, children will be to gather at least 10 families under this program, to receive the boxes for pickup and gather the payments.

Currently, there are five villages enrolled in the program. In Manila, they include Ayala Alabang [for residents in the south], Makati [for residents of both BGC and Makati], Quezon Circle [Kalaw, White Plains and Palikaran Subdivision, and Shaw Boulevard [for northern residents].

There is also a Veggie Picnic in Cagayan de Oro. Perkins is currently looking for businesses for the areas and villages of Tagaytay, Makati, Dasmariñas, Greenhills and The Fort.

I understand why people go crazy for their vegetables, because I do, too. As I stood in my e-mail to Perkins:

"Your vegetables are so fresh, considering that I got them a day after they were sent. The vegetables look like they were Photoshopped. Beautiful! Perfect condition. Most surprised shipping and handling.

Broccoli and cauliflower pictured in their prime, super flavorful, meaty, perfect texture and crunch.

Spinach and romaine: equally fantastic, no grassy taste. And to think I picked them!"

Arugula: Nothing like it, so pungent in flavor, nice and sharp yet a smooth finish on the tongue. Smells so good.

Carrots. Photoshopped... Full-bodied, not mamsy but tons and thick, does not separate or lose the veggie with that skinny, slightly bitter taste—a rather common characteristic of carrots made into juice.

Last, vegetables were in match-watching! With My Personal Farmer, they are more!

[For inquiries/information: e-mail teresa@mypersonalfarmer.ph; call 0922 8008842, 0919 8142739]

The healthier choice

There are two schools of thought when it comes to life. As they say in Filipino "Ang buhay ay pabalasan o pasarap pare!"

After all that vegetable talk, let's go to pasarap part.

I first tasted Hecky's Organic Lechon during the buyers' Christmas Party. It was yummy. I enjoyed every bite of the skin and meat so though I was devouring vegetable stews.

I called one of the owners of Hecky's, Carla Hizon-Sia, who said, "Our lechons are organic. We only use free range native pigs that feed on rice husks, coconut meat and whatever they can forage running around the fields, rice residue and coconut husks of Quezon Province, Mandaluyong and Bicol."

"We are the only one in the Philippines to use UPG swine. Through conversion, our swine literally suck the fat away [the 40 percent of pork fat], does not clog us. It's the healthier choice."

Hecky's Lechon is named after Carla's late father, Hector C. Talusan, who came up with the idea of roasting pigs to an own.

"After his passing, we decided to continue my dad's small but very promising lechon business. And that's how it all started," said Carla.

"My brother in law came to us with a new special formula rice and flavor for the lechon. We also learned how to cook the pigs in the ovens, and that's how we became lechon sayle."

Organic or not, I'll eat Hecky's lechon anytime. (Call 0917-634 0951)

Get a copy of my new summer cooking class schedules. Call Ana Roces at 917/8660, 917/8661, 0908 2372249. E-mail enquiries@pinoy.com.ph

Hecky's oven-roasted native pigs have 30-40 percent less pork fat

HECKY'S Organic Lechon

MINES Perkins and Loren Manzano with their homegrown vegetables

Ditch the 'shortcut'—white wine first before red

By Anna A. Jamisola

IF WINEMAKERS COULD talk, this one would tell tales of surviving and triumphing over the Thirty Years War, the French Revolutions, the Napoleonic War and the Franco-Prussian War.

Ideally located in the Alsace Region of France that has cultivated wine for more than 2,000 years, the Hugel & Fils vineyards today are considered among the world's finest producers of premium white wines.

At the easternmost part of France between Burgundy and Germany, and just beside the German border, the Alsace Region is blessed with the best climate and environment to grow grapes, perfect for producing white wines. The cool climate is also ideal for long growing seasons that allow for the grapes' slow maturation.

"This is why we mostly grow white wines that are dry but aromatic and fruity," said Etienne Hugel, general director, Hugel & Fils. Hugel is the 12th generation descendant of winemakers and founders of Hugel & Fils, producers of fine white wines since 1639.

These French whites are said to have the most 'genuine expression of grapes in a bottle'

ETIENNE Hugel, general director, Hugel & Fils

HUGEL & Fils

Staple

He said Hugel & Fils is a staple in almost all three-star Michelin restaurants in Europe, and is constantly served during official functions for heads of state, royalty, dignitaries and diplomats.

Hugel recently discovered that King Mswatidi of Thailand keeps Hugel & Fils in his home. US First Lady Michelle Obama was also seen enjoying her glass during a state function.

It is the pursuit of the perfect marriage of wine and food that drives wine lovers to swirl, smell and sip wines from one vintage year to the other. As wine connoisseurs of varied knowledge all, he lingers on the best flavors in both. White writers have noted that the best match for Asian cuisine is a Hugel & Fils wine, said Hugel.

The Hugel Alsace wines, produced with no enzymes from either sweetening or salting, is said to have the most "genuine expression of grapes in a bottle."

Organic is a state of mind, Hugel said. Although his vineyards have never used chemicals or fertilizers, they do not carry the label "organic." If the quality wine can only be produced from fine quality grapes. "You can only achieve quality in flavor and complexity in your wine if your grapes grow in perfect organic conditions," he said.

And that covers practically all the best wines in France, he added. He said Hugel & Fils vineyards have always grown grapes with respect to the environment. They've basically produced almost exactly as in 1639.

Appreciation

Unfortunately, Hugel said, most house consumers in the Philippines included, take a "shortcut" to wine appreciation by starting the wrong way. Except for Japan, about 80-90 percent of the Asian market prefers red to white.

In western countries, Hugel said people normally start with slightly sweet whites wine before going for drier whites. The ultimate step is the red wine. Once they've learned to appreciate red, he said, that's the time they really shift from white to red, depending on food. This is the normal progression.

"Starting with red is very common among newcomers to wine, more so in Asia where the red wine trend is spreading in many cultures," Hugel said. A sophisticated market like Japan that's been drinking wine for many years goes beyond nuances of white and red, he said, and does it because white is the right match for certain dishes.

Another fact that makes red popular is its widely vaunted health benefits, he said. "Red wine makes you healthy, white wine makes you happy. So a little bit of both is good," Hugel said.

Romeo Liu, managing partner of the newly opened restaurant called Wine Story, added that people should always drink white before red. A basic guide for beginners should first be served with white before the red. Wine Story, retailers of rare and fine wines including Hugel & Fils, is at G/F Shangri-La Plaza Mall, fronting Edsa Shangri-La Mandaluyong.

Pairs cheeses, believed to be best paired with red, are better served with white, said Hugel. These are, in fact, more whites than match with cheese.

"The dominance of red wine in Asia is really overwhelming. But that's because it is an emerging market. With more education and appreciation, white wine will find its way in to the Asians' hearts," he said.

Sizzling 'balot,' Japanese tofu steak

LITTLE ASIA SERVES SIZZLING BALOT Cantonese Prawns, Korean Beef Stew, Prawn Salad, Japanese Tofu Steak and Boneless Tilapia with Asian Mayo Sauce. Other specialties include Crispy Dinuguan, Grilled Pork Cutlet with Tonkatsu and Thai Chicken Barbecue with Nam Jim Jaew. Desserts include Caramel Mango Tower and Crepe Samurai. Little Asia is at Teresa Homes corner Sct. Fuentebella St., Quezon City. Tel. 2130008 and 6160821; 24, Promenade Greenhills (151-9255 and 727-4282); and The Podium, Ortigas Ave. Fort Bonifacio (7900064).

Pork back ribs 'adobo'

Visitors serves primetime campers such as Chicken Inasal, Pork Barbecue, Sizzling Tofu Steak and Boneless Tilapia with Asian Mayo Sauce. Other specialties include Crispy Dinuguan, Grilled Pork Cutlet with Tonkatsu and Thai Chicken Barbecue with Nam Jim Jaew. Desserts include Caramel Mango Tower and Crepe Samurai. Little Asia is at Teresa Homes corner Sct. Fuentebella St., Quezon City. Tel. 2130008 and 6160821; 24, Promenade Greenhills (151-9255 and 727-4282); and The Podium, Ortigas Ave. Fort Bonifacio (7900064).

New quesadilla

Sam Sall's now offering is Extreme Cheese and Beef Quesadilla—cheddar, mozzarella, pasteurized Monterey jack and pure ground beef wrapped in tortilla and grilled on both sides. Order Extreme Cheese and Beef Quesadilla is available in conjunction with Blackout Specials and is refreshing drink. Available at Sam Sall branches: Gateway Mall, G/F and 2/L food Express) and Trillanes.

I-Hop craze

Iwise Continental Manila presents I-Hop, which allows guests to eat as much as they want at all restaurant outlets on Sundays, 11 a.m. 3 p.m. at Prince Mount Hotel in Commercial, appetizers and desserts and its signature US Prime Rib at Beef and Bottomless. Both Sundays offers a buffet spread of popular Filipino and Chinese dishes and desserts, while Cantonese fare serves healthy Mediterranean specialties. I-Hop guests can also enjoy dining at the outdoor pool from 12 noon to 9 p.m. Kids can also play at the Children's Activity Room. To reap the experience, snacks are served at Iwise Sombra poolside restaurant 3 p.m. - 6 p.m. Call 7837888.

Cheesy Baked Oysters: Tres Leni, Sombra offers seafood dishes: Barbecued Shrimps, Cream Dory Mango, Seafood Boil, Steamed Pacific Clams, Cheesy Baked Oysters, Jumpin' Shrimp & Fries, Calamari Fritt, Shrimp Remoulade, Cajun Blackened Salmon, Creamy Cream Dory and Ultimate Seafood Feast, among others. Sombra branches are at 24, Entertainment Mall, SM Mall of Asia, 3/L, Robinsons Manila Midtown, 3/L, SM City The Block, North Edsa; and 2/L, Ayala Bldg., SM Megamall. Call 6660238, 4430166 and 6377826.

Pizza and pasta

Chef Dimitrio Pandanoni, executive consultant for Bistro, offers different flavors of pizza and pasta, as well as American favorites such as Maryland Ribs, sandwiches and beverages. Bistro Dimitrio has branches at 389 Megastall, Pasgor, Tagaytay and Angeles City, Pampanga.

Dining Out

Churros con Chocolate

Casa Armas serves Churros con Chocolate, a fried dough pastry-based snack dipped in hot chocolate. Casa Armas branches are at 1 Net Podium, tel. 6878900; Greenbelt 3, 7514006; and Jupiter St., Makati, 8923601.

Seafood Caesar Supreme

Burgos goes meatless this Lent with Shrimps & Chips, Seafood Jambalaya, Shrimp Paprika, Battered Linguine, Spinach Grilled Salmon, Quick Broiled Prawn, Golden Pan-Fried Salmon, Friday Fish Fry, Prawn Croquettes, Seafood Caesar Supreme, Lemon Pepper Grilled Lapu-Lapu, Grilled Squid a la Provencal, Burgos also serves Baked Potato Slices, Mozzarella Sticks, Supreme Onion Rings, Bread with Garlic Shallots Dip, Caesar Salad and Vegetarian or Margherita Pizza. Call 8211414, 8381818, 8924264, 7262676, 9108172, 8488881 or 8328258.

ENTERTAINMENT

Lira Soriano-G. Velarde

Indie film screenings at UST

CINEMATA, the film education program of the University of Santo Tomas' student pages, the Varsitarian, will screen the documentary "Dreamphobic Waves," and the indie films "Last Supper No. 3," "Hangkaan," "Tibong Sana Kita" and "Hanggang sa Tuos" on March 3, Kiral Conference Hall of the UST Faculty of Arts and Letters. Also to be shown are Brillante Mendoza's "Lola" (1:15 p.m.) and "Kinatay" (3:45 p.m.) on March 4, Thomas Aquinas Research Complex auditorium.

INSIDE

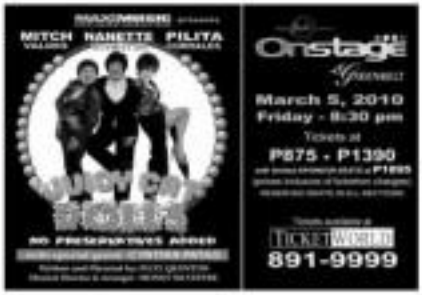
■ Gerald ready to go without Kim Take Five /D6

■ Carlyle Cafe debut for Lea /D6

■ Distribution is new indie battlefield /D6

■ Pint-sized and reluctant heroes /D3

Movie Treat



MO'NIQUE (top) and **Gabourey Sidibe** won acting honors for "Precious," from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

ROAD Becks with a juvenile crocodile

Croc capture

SIDEN MONTES ago, 33 juvenile Philippine crocodiles were released into Isabela's Dinkiran Lake.

"Born to be Wild" host Doc Feida Recio announced the groundbreaking event, and participated in the movement of the croc.

In tonight's episode, Doc Feida revisits Dinkiran to check on the progress while on host Alec Bueza visits a community that lives on catching and selling aquarium fish.

Alec follows the catcher, and that scene Fabien tryer before reaching home.

"Born to be Wild" airs Thursdays after "Sakot" on GMA.

TEEN IS THE love that is true votes for the Ms. Filipinas Shopper/ Choice Award—to Arnawa Center promo for the forthcoming Ms. Filipinas 2010. And a record at least P300 from Arnawa Center candidateness, including teens, actors, models, shoppers to choose their favorites among the 24 Ms. Filipinas candidates. The Shopper/ Choice award comes with a P25,000 prize.

From sidekicks to reluctant heroes

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

TV DIRECTOR MIKE TUVERA points out that the main characters of the new GMA 7 fantasy series, "Panday Kids," are not only pint sized; they are reluctant heroes.

But that's precisely what attracted Tuvera to the story a re-imagining of the famous franchise created by Carlo J. Caparas for the late Action King Fernando Poe Jr.

"Child actors in the 'Panday' series are usually relegated to 'kulang-kulit' status, but the kids on this new show...Buboy 'Buboy' Villar, Julian Trono and Isidora Mae...some into their own, says Tuvera.

"They are initially hesitant to fulfill their destiny as heroes," he relates. "They just want to play like all other children."

It's a homage to FPJ's movie character, Tuvera notes. "The 'Panday' hero just wanted to remain a blacksmith."

He explains that it's a delicate balancing act, "coming up with a younger and more modern take ... while remaining true to 'Panday' mythology."

JULIAN Trono, Robert "Buboy" Villar and Isidora Mae

He says Caparas worked very closely with the creative team to ensure that the new series would have closely to the Aswang narrative.

He admits that there's pressure in revisiting the "Panday" franchise, considering the success of the original "Panday" (earlier topbilled by FPJ, and were the recent Metro Manila Film Fest top-grosser starring Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr.

Nevertheless, Tuvera hopes to leave his mark on the beloved classic.

He gathered the same creative team behind his old shows "Captain Barbell," "Lupin" and "Love Mystics." The costumes are by Bill Gomila and production design is by Harold Cruz.

The kids joined adult cast members JC de Vera, Jackie Rice and Polo Ravales in training with fight instructor Larry Ang, who Sid Boots in from mainland China.

"I wanted the cast to learn stunts properly," Tuvera said, "so their movements would be graceful, like dancing."

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BEN — BY DANIEL SHELTON

KISO MACHINE — BY HANS ARRIEN

SHERMAN'S LAGOON — BY JIM TOOMEY

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

ARIES (March 21 to April 19). This is a fabulous day for research. Do you best. Your mind is particularly penetrating, and you have excellent powers of concentration.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20). Disconcerting with others, especially in group situations, will be powerful from Monday. People will be touchy, you. It will inspire you have much more luck than usual in your words.)

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20). Don't hesitate to speak up with bosses, parents, teachers and VIPs today. You sound like you know what you're saying. You have a strong sense of reality, influencing the public.)

CANCER (June 21 to July 22). You will enjoy one kind of study especially about history, philosophy, religion or anything pertaining to foreign cultures/customs movements. You tend to get the bottom of things. (Not to also very interesting.)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22). You wonder how's a better day to tackle old fear's beliefs about emotional matters, especially those involving children and romantic affairs. Actually, you also, shut up your drama and figure!

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22). Discussions with partners and friends will be unusually productive today. You're very powerful and to the point. One party is going to be most compatible towards from the Other.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22). This is a good day to take a chance. Don't be afraid to do something different. Don't hesitate, you can introduce improvements in your health.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21). This is a great day for sports. It's also a good day in preparation for the arts or other business. You want to clean things up and get them right.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21). Family discussions will be revealing today. This is a good day for family issues, gatherings, entertaining, shopping and anything to do with gardens.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19). You're so overdoing, you can't afford to be. Be cautious. Don't overdo today! Don't be careful you don't screw up too strong with others.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 19). There's a good likelihood that you can win over users of making money today. Or you may run into misunderstandings in connection with your work.

PISCES (Feb. 20 to March 20). Your powers of observation are very keen today. You notice everything around you. You can be critical to everything as well, which makes you can spot a penny a mile away.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

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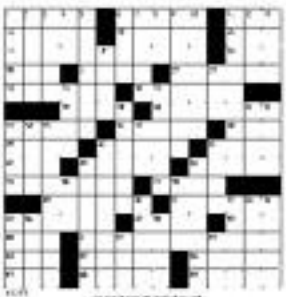
3	4	9	1	2	5	8	7	6
8	5	4	7	1	6	9	2	3
6	9	7	8	3	2	1	4	5
1	3	2	9	5	4	7	6	8
4	8	6	5	7	9	2	3	1
5	2	3	6	8	1	5	9	4
9	1	4	2	4	3	6	8	7

Conceptis Sudoku By Conceptis Puzzles

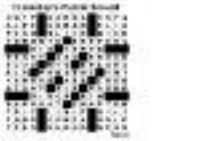
8		6				2		5
					9			
4				5	3			8
					5	1	7	
		4				8		
	3	1	4					
5			2	4				6
			7					
1		8				7		9

Difficulty Level ★★★

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



Yesterday's Puzzle Solved



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2 ALICE IN WONDERLAND
3 THE FOURTH KIND
4 PRAY
5 COP OUT

1 ALICE IN WONDERLAND (Digital 3D)
2 THE ROAD
3 MISS YOU LIKE CRAZY
4 UP IN THE AIR

MANILA

1 MISS YOU LIKE CRAZY
2 FROM PARIS WITH LOVE
3 THE ROAD
4 ALICE IN WONDERLAND
5 THE FOURTH KIND
6 COP OUT
7 UP IN THE AIR

METRO EAST

1 MISS YOU LIKE CRAZY
2 FROM PARIS WITH LOVE
3 ALICE IN WONDERLAND
4 THE FOURTH KIND
5 COP OUT
7 THE ROAD
8 ALICE IN WONDERLAND

NOVALICHES

1 MISS YOU LIKE CRAZY
2 ALICE IN WONDERLAND
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3 COP OUT
4 THE WEEKEND

STARMILLS

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2 FROM PARIS WITH LOVE
3 COP OUT
4 DEAR JOHN
5 ALICE IN WONDERLAND
6 ALICE IN WONDERLAND

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2 ALICE IN WONDERLAND
3 THE FOURTH KIND
4 COP OUT

ANGELES

1 MISS YOU LIKE CRAZY
2 FROM PARIS WITH LOVE
3 COP OUT
4 ALICE IN WONDERLAND

TACLOBAN

1 MISS YOU LIKE CRAZY
2 ALICE IN WONDERLAND
3 FROM PARIS WITH LOVE

DUMAGUETE

1 MISS YOU LIKE CRAZY
2 ALICE IN WONDERLAND
3 FROM PARIS WITH LOVE

BACOLOD

1 MISS YOU LIKE CRAZY
2 [illegible]
3 ALICE IN WONDERLAND
4 CLASH OF THE TITANS 3D
5 FROM PARIS WITH LOVE
6 COP OUT

ILOILO

1 MISS YOU LIKE CRAZY
2 [illegible]
3 ALICE IN WONDERLAND
4 FROM PARIS WITH LOVE
5 COP OUT
6 DEAR JOHN

GENSAN

1 MISS YOU LIKE CRAZY
2 INVICTUS
3 FROM PARIS WITH LOVE
4 SOLOMON KANE

ILOCOS NORTE

1 MISS YOU LIKE CRAZY
2 ALICE IN WONDERLAND
3 [illegible]

My New York stories

NEW YORK—I'VE BEEN HERE two weeks now. (The first was spent getting rid of a corn cluster and a hard cold, "getting sassy pneumia" (translation and Pic.).)

The reading is done, "friendsassy" backwards" was a smash, and I'm in vile mid-edits of rehearsals for my show, "Carlyle Cabaret" (for videos and details, in case you're in Manhattan from March 9-27, visit www.theoir.com/carlyle.cfm).

4 Pkasses

My team (Dan Bobbin, director; Diana Hammerstein, scriptwriter; and Larry Tarman, musical director) and I have gone through the music and at least three drafts of the script. It's been an insane few, maybe it's because all four of us are Pisceans! I'm very excited about my Carlyle debut!

Being in the city again has reintroduced me to the things about it that I've fallen in love with, and again I am finding myself passionate and inspired about what I love to do most.

Chicken soup

I've been staying in a hotel just a stone's throw away from one of my favorite delis here, the legendary Carnegie Deli, a block away from Carnegie Hall. The deli is famous for yummy sandwich specials, but I've been a fiend for the chicken and matzo ball soup.

Since I was recovering and couldn't go out, I asked the hotel concierge to please order me some, and he kindly went to the deli himself! (Only 15 minutes after my call). I had a New Yorker sandwich, a large tub of soup and a glass of Diet Coke (no sugar, no fat, no calories—I'm trying to stay, it didn't take very long for me to feel very better. I wonder what they put in that chicken soup?

Slush!

A snowstorm came through New York City last week. I love watching the snow come down, when I'm in my flannel pajamas, a cup of hot cocoa in my hand. However, snow is an absolute inconvenience when I commute.

When it's dry and crunchy underfoot, snow is easy enough to negotiate. But when it melts into slush, it can be frustrating. If gentle and puddles or slivers every street corner, turning the simple business of crossing the street into an Olympic event. I know, this is nothing compared to what many Filipinos endure in the rainy season, so I shouldn't complain. What impresses me, I have to say, is that 24 hours later, the streets and sidewalks are passable again.

Broadway!

I'll never get enough of Broadway. So far, I've seen "Billy Elliot," "Mamma Mia," and "In the Heights." There's one more on my end, today this week: "A Little Night Music," starring Catherine Zeta-Jones and Angela Lansbury.

"In the Heights" offers a look into a neighborhood in Washington Heights inhabited mostly by immigrants from the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. Created by Lin-Manuel Miranda, this Tony Award-winning musical transported me at times to shopping salon deals, thanks to the infectious rhythms.

"Memphis" is an inspired by events in the 1950s, at the advent of rock 'n' roll in America. Black music is banned on radio but, thanks to Huey Calhoun, a white man who becomes a radio DJ, "race music" is played and rises to enormous popularity. Huey falls in love with (not yet) being sung at the time) black music, and a beautiful black singer.

The music of "Memphis" is written by David Bryan (an original member of Bon Jovi), with a book by Joe DiPietro. It is an energetic musical with fantastic songs, wonderful choreography, and an incredible cast. I tear in tears at intervals, and on my feet in curtain call.

Cabaret

I was invited in a show at the Café Carlyle, where my own cabaret will be staged. "Bath Boy" was the featured performer, accompanied by a pianist. His song interpretations were remarkable. All the sounds she sang in the classic ruled "Fever" (all the songs had something to do with a fever), was taken apart and put back together in some interesting and amazing ways. I really learned a lot watching her.

So many adventures so far, and so many more to have! I wonder what's up next this week?

"DIKDIKDIKITNO"—converting to Zimri-ese admirable.

"LAST SUPPER NO. 3," pulled out after only two days as bodyfilms.

BACK STORY

Lesi Sabanga

New indie battlefield: Distribution

By Rayzel San Diego Jr.

INDEPENDENT FILMmaker Alvin Yapan initiated shooting news during a forum with students at the Ateneo de Manila University. An acquaintance had bought a bootleg copy of his Cannes-winning film, "Tribu Pangpanglima Kay Fe."

Yapan said that he didn't know whether to feel "flattered or offended" that his film, misdescribed, had been pirated.

In the same forum, sponsored by the youth organization Ateneo Lingua Aro Cultura, Venice Film Festival winner Brillante Mendoza stressed that two main obstacles prevent indies from enjoying nationwide distribution: The prohibitive costs of prints and advertising.

When his debut film, "Kaleseryosa," which won both in Cannes/Cinéfondation and in Venice, had a mall run last year, he had to come up with creative solutions to these problems, he said.

Contrary to a commonly held perception in the indie community, Diokno related, he didn't encounter resistance from theater owners—specifically, not with SM Cinemas.

After all, theaters need content to stay profitable from, whether film or digital.

"We chose to play it four theaters for three days in December last year. All it was supportive ... playing our trailer before "Twilight." Still, even offered us a week-long run," Diokno said.

However, he opted for a shorter run. "I wasn't prepared to spend millions of pesos creating an income in 35mm."

Instead, Diokno screened his film in digital format. "Interesting, we tested our own high-definition players and projectors. For three days, this cost a fraction, imagine seven days! "

The advertising "prep" was filled by "partnering with IYAY and OSI, Wanchpad' netflicks," Diokno said. "The company hosted press screenings, radio ads, interviews in Manila and Cebu." He stressed that "savings" afforded by digital technology should be funneled into online and in-theater advertising. "With a good marketing campaign," he said, "an indie film/theater tie is possible ... to five years."

Daunting

In an e-mail interview, filmmaker Veronica Velasco said "Alambreng" her movie, last year's Cinemalaya winner "Last Supper No. 3," proved daunting.

"I had very little knowledge about distribution ... I felt lost going about it," she admitted.

She relied on the experiences of filmmakers who came before her. "I appreciate the advice I got from those who had successfully distributed their films. Still, I'm not clear on which direction to go. I was scared to release my movie and end up with just a handful of people in the theater. That would be painful. But I figured we just had to try."

Velasco kept crying, and finally scheduled "Last Supper No. 3" for a run at Robinsons Galleria's Infinitea. The film was supposed to run for a week, but was pulled out after two days.

"I have plans of screening 'Last Supper' in schools and Filipino communities abroad," Velasco said. "It's important to have that screen screened because [it allows us] to laugh at the idiosyncrasies of being Filipinos."

Keep the faith

Diokno, a Cinemalaya batch mate of Velasco and Yapan, remains optimistic.

Times are changing, he said. "Thanks to movies like 'Rotic,' more and more cineastes are converting to digital. Meaning, in the not-so-distant future, maybe one to two years, film makers can just plug their hard drives in cinemas and play their films simultaneously nationwide without spending millions on converting (converting digital to film)."

In the meantime, the struggle continues, said Diokno. "All we need is for indies to start working on quality and break the mold of 'chospirasy.' We need stories for tomorrow's world, not yesterday's; personal cruelty, comedy and chastise hellbent revenges."

"MAGPAKAILANMAN SA BATTLE," already pressed.

As important as awards and accolades, local filmmakers say, is being viewed by Pinoy audiences

Gerald ready to go Kim-less

By Rhoderick R. Cruz

UNLIKE MANY OTHER SHOWBiz newcomers, young actor Gerald Anderson was never inclined to endorse any political candidate in the forthcoming election.

"Whatever opinion I may have on the candidates, as slim to big [size]," Gerald told Inquirer Entertainment.

"I don't plan on influencing others about my president of choice. I'm just hoping for the best."

However, the actor is an endorser of 16 products, the latest of which, Dermabond's Green Tea Tea cleansing soap, was launched last Saturday.

Gerald also said that, while he works with Kim Aquino in the drama show "Kung Tayo'y Magkakalayo," the TV host never tried to convince him to help campaign for her brother, Liberal Party standard-bearer Benigno Aquino III.

Here's the working relationship among the cast members? There's a rumor that Kim and Gues Dimples are not seeing eye-to-eye.

Gues, Tita Gina Pareño, Kim (Tita) and I all smile from "Saving Dalawa." We're like a family already. Gabby (Concepcion) and Albert (Martinez) are like my older brothers now. I don't think Gues and Kim have a problem. If there ever was, I surely didn't notice.

Do you think you're ready to work with someone other than Kim?

We've both realized a lot from each other and from the people we've worked with for the past four years. I personally want to know if I could still be as effective on actor without Kim. I'm sure Kim would like that, too. But I trust the plans of the network bosses. They know what's best for me.

Who would you prefer to work with in a projected tailboard film?

I really want to work with someone who has been in show biz any longer than I have. She can give me a lot of acting tips.

What's the secret to an effective on-screen partnership?

I guess people see that Kim and I had chemistry and are nice to each other, and they liked that. I think it also helped that we love and appreciate each other very much.

What were the problems you encountered when you were just starting?

I wasn't used to having people closely watching my every move. Acting all the mid-point was also difficult.

What's your advice to the lifetimers here/there?

Amore [Francisco] and Mikel [Campbell] should spend time to figure out if the love they feel for each other is real. Sometimes, there's a tendency to get carried away in a situation. They should be honest with themselves and with each other.

Was shooting some skin on your latest movie ("Paano Na Kaya?") difficult for you?

The production people had a hard time talking me into wearing nothing but boxers for the most part of the movie. In the end, I said OK [ang, note-lang ang choice. It turned out to be really funny too.

You're turning 21 on March 7. What can people expect from you this year?

I'll be in a telenovela. Exhale. I surprised even myself on this project. It's an all-out role.

Today I'll be hosting a dance party for "Laman na Ako," it's my way of giving back.

GERALD is sure Kim would welcome a break from the tears-up, too.